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# **Table of Contents**

CHAPTER 1  
CHAPTER 2  
CHAPTER 3  
CHAPTER 4  
CHAPTER 5  
CHAPTER 6  
CHAPTER 7  
CHAPTER 8  
CHAPTER 9  
CHAPTER 10  
CHAPTER 11  
CHAPTER 12  
CHAPTER 13  
CHAPTER 14  
CHAPTER 15  
CHAPTER 16

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# **Heart**

**By**

**JM Kelley**

## **Acknowledgment**

To CD Reiss; Your words have always been an inspiration. Thank you for the chance to write in the Drazen World. It's an opportunity of a life time and a dream come true.

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To my husband and the man of my dreams; Thank you for all your support and always believing in me. Your love has given me the strength to accomplish my dreams.

## PROLOGUE

The atmosphere is buzzing, and the whiskey is flowing at The Bar tonight. Yes, that's the actual name of this establishment here in Jackson Texas, population: 1,819, where I reside. *Not for much longer!* I think It's meant to be some ode to Billy Joel, considering all his music memorabilia is plastered all over these wood-paneled walls. You'd think it would have a cowboy theme, but the owner Hank is originally from New York, so I guess it makes sense to him. It's the only place in this tiny town to hide away and drown your sorrows on a Friday night, which usually is what you'll find me doing, but tonight everyone is here to celebrate. Tonight, everyone is here to say goodbye to the Thorensen brothers. My baby brother by two years, Ben, is leaving Monday on his first tour of duty to Afghanistan, and I will be continuing my education at Stanford School of Medicine.

I notice her the moment I walk in. She's quite hard to miss with that sexy-as-fuck, curvy in all the right places body of hers. Her beautiful, angelic, girl next door look makes everyone stop and take notice. An infectious smile brightens her entire face as she throws her head back to laugh at something one of her girlfriends just whispered in her ear. Her smile lights up the entire room and could bring any strong man to his knees. I pause in the doorway, not to scout out the place, but because I need a moment to catch my breath just at the sight of her. She's a perfect fantasy, her tight blue skinny jeans

hug her body in all the right places. The genuine-snakeskin cowboy boots her jeans are tucked into, make her look amazingly bad-ass. Her fantastic perky breasts, the ones I fantasize about at night, are barely contained in the tight black V-neck T-shirt she's wearing. Her natural beauty doesn't require makeup, but she always wears just a little. I'm mesmerized watching her soft blonde locks fall around her face when she throws back a shot of some amber, fiery liquid. She slams the empty glass on the bar and places the back of her hand over her scrunched up mouth, letting out the cutest giggle, and I wish I could hear that sound every day for the rest of my life.

Her blue eyes sparkle when she lifts her head up and glances across the bar, catching me gawking at her. She breaks into a slow sexy grin and waves me over, but my feet feel like their cemented on the sawdust-covered floor. My chest tightens, and all the oxygen is sucked from the room when she smiles at me. Reality smacks me like a slap in the face when someone stomps up behind her, wraps his arms around her tiny waist and nuzzles his face into her neck. The delusional part of my brain wants to grab the guy and pummel his face into the edge of the bar, but the rational part knows that it wouldn't be right to do that to my brother or his girlfriend of three years, the girl who is off limits to me.

I greet a few people as I make my way over to the corner of the bar where Ben and Sarah mingle. Ben slaps me on the back and hands me a shot of whiskey. "What's up baby brother?" He slurs, clearly already three-sheets-to-the-wind. "You know I'm your older brother, right?" I deadpan. Considering he has three inches on me and almost twice the body mass, I can see where he'd get confused. He could probably bench press me on a bad day. *Man, I need to work out more.* Sarah pulls me in for a hug, her body softening against mine, and I can't help inhaling her sweet, honey scent. *God, I need to get out of this town.* "Hi Brad, now that you're both here, we can get this party started." I must have held her in the hug a little too long because she releases a slow breath and her body goes rigid before she nervously backs away. I just want to pull her back into my arms and keep her there all

night. “Hey, Sarah!” is about all I can muster, before I throw my shot back and relish the burn.

The day my brother brought Sarah home was the day I fell in love with her. Ben was a senior, Sarah a junior, and I was already in college. I hated seeing them together from the beginning, and it’s beyond me why she stays with the douchebag. Ben has always been nothing but trouble, running around town drunk just like dear old Dad, and fucking anything with a pair of tits. Their relationship has had plenty of ups and downs over the past three years, but my brother swears he’s in love with Sarah. He insists she is the woman who is going to make him change his asshole ways. She deserves better than him. “Get us another round of shots Kelly!” My inebriated brother shouts across the bar to the bartender, a girl I graduated high school with. I clench my fists, feeling the urge to hit him when his eyes land on Kelly’s ass a little too long. When I glance over to Sarah, she’s oblivious to his ogling.

Two months ago, Sarah caught Ben kissing another woman, but somehow, he brainwashed her and she gave him another chance. It pissed me off, and I had a massive fight with my brother over it, but Ben swears nothing happened. Say’s he’s a changed man, and committed to Sarah. He insists the military is going to make him into the man Sarah needs. *I’m not so sure.* I kind of doubt every word that spews out of his mouth. If she were mine, I’d treat her like a queen.

The shots are brought over, and when Sarah reaches for her drink, that’s when I see it, the tiny diamond that’s shining off of her left hand. Ben turns to me, and the corners of his mouth curve up into a devious lopsided grin. I take a deep breath and feel all the blood rush from my face. “That’s right brother, need to take care of business at home before I leave.” He pulls Sarah into his arms tight and kisses her on the forehead. “Wouldn’t want anyone stealing my girl while I’m gone, now would we?” I feel like I’m about to hurl. I want to storm out of this bar and get away. Instead, I congratulate them both and buy them another drink. Tomorrow can’t come soon enough. I need to leave this crappy town and never look back.



I stew in the corner with my feet resting on the empty bar stool next to me, nursing my whiskey. I don't feel like mingling with anyone tonight, in fact, all I can think about is how many hours until I'm out of this damn town, so I can start my new life. I've always felt like an outsider here in Jackson, judged because of my last name, condemned just because I was born into a shitty family. Both my parents are alcoholics, my father the happy drunk and my mother the abusive drunk. Mom always let my brother, and I know how much she wished we were never born, whether it was with her cruel words or her iron fists, and Dad was always too drunk to care. *Just your typical dysfunctional family!* The entire town puts me in the same category as my lying, cheating, douchebag brother, but I'm nothing like him. My reputation suffers by association, but I'm working hard to make something of myself. I've completed four years of college at the local state university, and now I'm off to medical school to prove them all wrong.

Every so often I catch her eyeing me from across the room and wonder if she's thinking about me too. I always like to imagine that she feels the same way I do, but I know It's all a fantasy. Everyone around me is having fun, shooting pool, playing darts and line dancing, and I'm just sitting here torturing myself as I watch the girl of my dreams and the way her sinful body sways to the music. When she glances in my direction, and our eyes connect, it feels like It's just her and me in the room. My brother is wasted and flirting with other girls when he thinks Sarah isn't looking, and I just want to get up and punch him in the face for the way he makes her feel. Can't he see what a precious gift she is? The more I sit and fume, the more my rage flames inside. And the more I sit and watch her, the harder my dick gets. She's bent over the pool table, and my thoughts grow wild. *I run my hands over that sexy, hot ass of her's, and she wraps her long smooth legs around my waist as I slide my thick cock inside her.* I need to get the fuck out of here before I drive myself insane, so I jump off the bar stool and make my way down the musty corridor to the bathroom, needing to relieve myself before I sneak out.

A loud crash comes from the supply closet before I have a chance to push the bathroom door open, so I decide to check

it out. I swing the door open, livid at the display. Ben is in a lip lock with Kelly, his hands roaming across her naked breasts. They both startle and break apart at the sight of me. Kelly's arms fly over her chest in embarrassment, and my brother just smirks. I turn and storm away, but Brad is hot on my heels, and I'm surprised he can even walk straight. I race through the bar as quickly as possible avoiding eye contact with anyone. I just need to make it to the parking lot before anyone stops me because at this moment I think I could be capable of murder.

"Brad!" My brother shouts as I fumble with the keys, trying to get them in the door of my truck as quick as possible, apparently not quick enough. "Brad wait up man." "Not now Ben, you need to go home, preferably with your fiancé." "You're not gonna say anything to Sarah, right?" He places his hand on my shoulder trying to stop me from getting into the truck, and I break. My fist slams into his jaw, and he falls flat on his ass. Pain radiates through my hand and up my arm, but I ignore it. I've never punched anyone before, and I'm glad my asshole brother is my first recipient. The idiot just sits on the ground stunned, rubbing his jaw, laughing. "Fuck Brad, what the hell." He struggles to get up, and I know it's the alcohol affecting him more than the punch. Half the bar is now marveling at the spectacle when Sarah comes running over and kneels down by Ben's side. "Brad, what the hell is going on?" She scowls up at me with angry blue eyes. *So fucking sexy!* "Heeey Baby, We were just fucking around. Brad punched me, and It didn't even hurt." Ben slurs every word, laying flat on his back in the middle of the graveled parking lot. Then he closes his eyes like he's about to go to sleep. *Asshole!* "Brad, help me get him up please," Sarah begs as she struggles to lift him. Of course, I help her, but he's dead weight until a couple of guys come over and help out. "Brad, Can you help me get him home, please?" My jaw clenches and I can still feel the blood flowing through the tendrils of my neck, but I can't deny the desperation swimming in her eyes when she pleads. "Let's get him in the truck."

The drive is quiet, as I make my way through the dark, winding, back roads. Sarah's perched in the back seat, with Ben's head resting on her lap. "What happened Ben?" Our

eyes meet in the rearview mirror, and I can see her tears threatening. “Just brotherly stuff Sarah, he’s just drunk and needs to sleep it off.” Her brows snap together and I know she doesn’t believe me, but she needs to figure this shit out on her own. She knows what he’s capable of, yet she still chooses him, and I refuse to get in the middle of it.

Doing most of the heavy lifting, I pull Ben from the truck. We sling his arms over both our shoulders and carefully walk him to the house he and I rent. Neither one of us could wait to get out of the home we grew up in, so when I was eighteen I left, and Ben followed. “You need to walk Ben, wake the fuck up.” I smack his cheek trying to keep him alert. “Heeey, baby brother, thanks for not ratting me out about Kelly,” He sings. I glance over and see Sarah’s expression harden. “Let’s go, Ben, Sarah’s here too, time for bed Shit head.” He rests his head on Sarah’s shoulder. “Aaaawe, hey Sarah, I love you, Baby.” “Ben, you’re an asshole.” Sarah hisses at him. We struggle to get him through the front door and roughly deposit him onto the couch since Its closer than the bedroom. I lift his feet up onto the couch, and Sarah yanks his boots off, dropping them onto the floor with a loud, angry thud. “Are you staying here tonight with him?” I ask as she throws the crochet blanket over his lifeless body. “Can you take me home, I told Momma I’d be home tonight. I don’t want her to worry.” The pain in her voice guts me, and I just want to scoop her up into my arms and never let go.

The tension between us grows thicker than the fog on the drive home. Sarah rests her head against the passenger window, quietly sighing while she bites the cuticles on her nails. She deserves better, someone whose sole purpose in life is to make her smile. *That couldn’t be me.* We pull onto her street, which is a dirt road with only a few houses on it. Her dad split when she was thirteen, so It’s just her and her Mom now, and she’s been sickly this past year, putting a lot of extra stress on Sarah. I stop the truck way back from her house and turn off the engine. I wonder to myself if I should just scrounge up the courage and tell her how I feel about her. But then what? We’d run away together and live happily ever after? I reach out and place my hand on hers. It’s warm and

comforting, and I just want to hold it in mine forever. “Sarah!” I whisper, causing her to gaze up from her lap with heavy sadness in her eyes. I swallow hard not quite sure what to say. “It’s okay Brad, I’ve accepted how he is. What choice do I have?” “You know you have a choice Sarah, you’ve always had a choice.” She stares back down at her lap, nervously wringing her hands. “Brad, what can I do? You leave tomorrow, and you’re probably never coming back. So tell me what my options are.” She stares me down. “You could come with me.” The words come out so quickly; my heart is pounding in my chest. I place my arm on her shoulder and slide her over to me until her body molds perfectly into mine. We’ve never been alone like this, in such an intimate situation, and it feels so good, almost natural like it’s supposed to be like this. “Brad!” She gazes up at me, and I swear I can see love in her eyes. She caresses my face with the palm of her hand, and all I can think about is pulling her closer and kissing her. “Brad, I was born in this town, and I’ll probably die here. I can’t leave my Momma, but you, you have the opportunity to leave this place and make something of yourself. I would only hold you back.” She whispers the last part. “We could make a life together, I know we could make it work.” “I can’t Brad.” She says softly, her sad eyes boring a deep hole straight into my soul.

I stroke her hair, my eyes still fixated on hers. I want to kiss her soft lips, just one time. I need it embedded in my brain before I leave, just to remember her by. Our lips are close, but she doesn’t move. Her enticing eyes darken with lust. She must feel the energy between us as much as I do. “Brad,” She whispers like a prayer, and I swear I can hear her heart beating, or maybe it’s just my own.

I shouldn’t, but I lean in and softly place my mouth on hers, her lips part immediately for me, and it’s heaven. Our kiss is nothing but lips, but everything that could destroy me. The kiss grows desperate like there’s no tomorrow because there is no tomorrow for us. She slips her tongue into my mouth, and I’m gone. I know I’ll never forget her soft, greedy lips, the dancing of our warm tongues. I begin to lose control. My fingers brush through her hair as I grasp the back of her neck

and pull her closer. A soft moan escapes her lips, and I know It's wrong, and I should end this, but I don't. Her arms reach around my neck, her delicate fingers curling through my hair, sending tingles down my spine. "Please Brad, just this once." She pleads as if I'm going to stop, but I never want to stop.

She climbs up on her knees, still locked with my lips, and I lift her over my lap, so she's straddling me. I smooth my hands over her breasts lightly pinching her erect nipples through her cotton shirt, and my cock turns to Steele when she moans into my mouth. She grabs the hem of her T-shirt and pulls it over her head, in one swift motion, then grapples at my shirt in a frenzy. I unclasp the front of her purple lace bra letting her gorgeous, perfect tits spill out. I need to feel her skin on mine, so I break the kiss, gasping for air, and quickly help her remove my T-shirt. She holds my gaze for a moment, and I see everything in her eyes that I'm feeling. We know it's wrong, and it will never go anywhere, but neither one of us is about to stop this. Three years of built of tension, wanting someone you know you can never have. We both know this will be our first and last time.

Tears begin to pool around her eyes, and oh no, I can't have that. So I frame her face in my hands and kiss her stronger. Kiss her until neither one of us is thinking straight. Our tongues dueling, mouths sucking till were both breathless. The feel of her warm skin against my chest lights my body on fire, and it's almost too much to bear. My dick is so fucking hard and throbbing; I have to slow down and gain some control before I blow my load like a teenager on prom night. Her shaky hands reach down, struggling with my belt, and I stop her motion by grabbing her wrists. "I need the taste of your pussy on my tongue first." I gently slide her off my lap and lay her across the bench of my truck. Lifting her legs, I remove her boots and chuck them to the floor in a fury. I wrestle her jean's down her legs until they are inside out and laying on the floor along with her panties. I pause, wanting to take in the sight of her bare pussy glistening in the moonlight. "Fuck Sarah, you're so damn sexy." And damn if she didn't just lick her lips. She anxiously begins to upright her self, but I

gently nudge her back down with the palm of my hand. “Na-ah Sunshine, I need to taste you first.”

I waste no time lowering my mouth to her center, inhaling her salty, sweet scent. Nudging her legs apart, I rest one on the steering wheel, and the other over my shoulder. I smooth my tongue along her seam, leisurely licking her from her ass to her clit. “Oh God, Brad,” I dip my tongue inside, and her taste is intoxicating. Soon I’m licking and sucking her like a possessed man. My tongue circles her hole, fucking her like I want to do with my cock. Her tiny moans and soft whimpers vibrate straight to my dick making it hard for me to keep control. The way she grinds her pussy against my mouth, so needy, is enough to unhinge me. “Brad, I’m gonna...” Her legs quake as I drive two fingers deep inside her tight, hot pussy and curl them, hitting that spot that makes her detonate. “God Brad, yes, yes,” Her thighs begin to tremble uncontrollably, and her pussy clenches around my fingers, my name on her lips, and it is the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.

With her body still shuddering and her pussy still pulsing, her sweet wetness coats my fingers and mouth. I give her a moment to come back down from the clouds, worried she might want to stop this. But she has other ideas when she springs up to her knees as if she’s on fire and kisses me with her taste still on my lips. “Jesus Brad, I need you now.” She breathes the words into my mouth as she grasps and claws at my belt and jeans. I help her work to undo them, and before I can even get them past my thighs, she’s straddling me and stroking my cock. She strokes me up and down with both hands, so unhurried, as she hungrily consumes me with her mouth. “Sarah, Baby, that feels incredible.” I groan as she slowly slides her pussy down the length of my thick cock. She’s so hot and tight; the pleasure is too overwhelming. “Baby, don’t move for a minute.” I plead, needing a second to regain some composure. She stills, her ass seated on my balls, her pussy so warm, and wet and tight, I could live here forever. We stare into each other’s eyes, and at this moment, we belong to one another, and no one else. *God, I love this girl.* I know when I leave here, I’ll be abandoning my heart.

She begins to move tenderly, but I'm out of control. I start to thrust my hips, pumping into her hard. My animalistic rhythm is harsh and possessive, and she takes it all, as her channel grips and squeezes around me. She places her hands above her head, flat against the roof, trying to gain leverage so her body can meet my brutal thrusts. "I've wanted this for so long, Sarah." I growl into her ear. She groans and her head falls back as she grips my shoulders. Her nails biting into my skin, as she chants my name over and over in the quiet of the night. "Come for me baby; I want to see you." I watch as her cheeks flush, and her body trembles around me. "Fuck Brad, yes." My pleasure builds like a wave rolling across my entire body. Her tight walls milk my cock, and I come hard like a wave crashing into the shore. I hold her firm, spurting deep inside her, as she spasms around me.

We hold each other, and just hold each other some more, neither one of us ever wanting to let go. "Come with me Sunshine, to California." I break the silence, and she slides off my lap beginning to gather up her clothes. "I can't Brad, I'm sorry." I watch her intently as she shakes her head back and forth. She swiftly throws her clothes back on, and I can't seem to move. "Wait for me, Sarah. I'll come back for you." I plead. "I won't; you won't." She won't even look at me. "I love you, Sarah," I confess without a second thought. "I've always loved you." She rests her head on my shoulder with a sharp sigh. "I know." She whispers, before sliding into her boots. With one last look, she jumps from the truck, slamming the door closed, and begins jogging away. She turns back to face me, the moonlight shining down on her, the shadows dancing across her features, her eyes twinkling like stars. She looks like an angel, and I'll have this picture of her, burnt into my memory forever. With tears streaming down her face, she mouths three words that break me. "I love you." Before turning and running through the field, and out of my life forever.

## CHAPTER 1

14 years later

BRAD

“Morning Grace, how was your weekend?” I greet my secretary, as she pulls charts from the cabinets in my office. “Quiet, Doc, thank goodness, the boys are still up at school. Why are you here so early?” I hand her the extra cup of coffee that I picked up this morning and drop my own on my desk. “I have a full day of patients, and a bunch of charts to review, figure I’d get a head start.” The phone rings as I hang my coat on the rack. I motion for her to answer it at my desk, so she doesn’t have to run to the front of the office. “Dr. Thorensen’s office, can I help you?” I boot up my computer and take a sip from my giant cup of brown sludge, needing as much caffeine as I can get this morning, since I stayed up half the night playing my favorite online video game, City Of Dis. “Who may I say is calling? I’ll see if he’s in, please hold.” I glance up at Grace and catch her rolling her eyes, and I know it’s going to be a long day if my secretary is already out of patience. “Dr. Thorensen, It’s for you, she says Its personal.” She huffs. “Who is it, Grace?” I question, already losing my patience, and clearly needing to get some work done. “It’s a woman, says she’s a friend. Her name is Sarah.” My body stiffens, but not before sending my coffee cup tumbling to the floor. “Shit, shit, shit! Put her on hold please while I clean up this mess, and close the door on your way out.”

I’d spoken to Sarah precisely two times since that night fourteen years ago. The first was at my Mother’s funeral ten



years ago, and the second was a year later when I lost my Father. Those were the only two times I made it back to Jackson and the only two times I've seen her or my brother in the past fourteen years. I've spoken to my brother a handful of times, but it was always generic and cold. *No love loss there!* But not a day goes by that I don't think about Sarah or that night. I often wonder what might have been if she'd come to California with me, or if I stayed and claimed her for my own. Sarah married Ben right after his first tour of duty, and I didn't even bother to go home for the wedding. Sarah was apparently pregnant when Ben left, and their daughter was born while he was over in Afghanistan. They married as soon as he returned home and it lasted a whopping six years before they divorced. *I'm surprised it lasted that long.* Ben joined the Marines to quote "find himself" which I guess he did because he decided to make a career out of it. I commend Ben for dedicating his life to protecting our country, but we never saw eye to eye, and it was hard for me to watch the way he treated Sarah. I'm sure the fact that he was always deployed somewhere across the continents, had a lot to do with why they divorced, or maybe she just tired of his lying, cheating ways, and decided to raise their daughter on her own. I heard she opened a bakery in town and it's doing reasonably well since Jackson has grown immensely over the past fourteen years, other than that, I don't know much about her life after I left.

My heart is racing uncontrollably, and I clear my throat before speaking into the phone. "Hello, this is Dr. Thorensen." There's complete silence on the other end, and I wonder if the call dropped. "Hello?" I repeat. "Brad!" That sweet voice I could never forget, whispers my name softly. "Sarah, is everything okay?" More silence, then I hear crying. "Sarah, please, tell me what's wrong." Her voice crackles when she speaks. "Brad, I need your help, I can't lose her." "Sarah, calm down and tell me what's wrong." "Brad, I need to tell you something. You're going to hate me." "I could never hate you, Sarah." More silence. "Just spit it out...is it Ben?" "It's Ashley." More silence, then I hear hysterics. "Sarah, talk to me, please," I plead. "She has Leukemia, Brad." "Okay, we have the best doctors here in Los Angeles, I can get her help." "You don't understand Brad, she needs a bone marrow

transplant, and I'm not a match." "What about Ben?" "Brad, I'm so sorry, please forgive me for what I'm about to tell you." She sobs through the phone. "Baby, I do not understand. What are you trying to tell me?" "Brad, Ashley is yours." I feel like someone just punched me in the gut, and all the air is sucked from my lungs. My mind is reeling, going back to that night, the night we didn't use protection. *Fuck!* "Brad?" "I'm confused. Are you saying that Ashley is my daughter?" "I'm so sorry Brad, you must hate me, but Ashley needs you, please." I'm stunned into a state of shock. "Our daughter needs you." She whispers. *Our daughter, my daughter!* I'm silent for what seems like hours. "Brad, Please!" "I'll be there." I hiss into the phone before hanging up. I lean back in my black leather chair holding my chest. For the second time in my life, my heart completely shredded by the same person.

## CHAPTER 2

### SARAH

I was a mess yesterday after the phone call to Brad. It was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do, but today is a new day, and I need to get my shit together. I need to be strong for Ashley because she is the only thing that matters in my life, and I can't allow myself to fall apart. Brad said he'd be here, and that's all that matters. *I trust him*. He must hate me, and I can't blame him. I'd hate me too. I'm sure it was shocking to hear from me after all these years, and quite a blow to the gut when I told him he had a daughter.

When Ashley started getting sick, we didn't know what was wrong with her at first. I took her to a specialist near Houston, and they performed a barrage of tests until they finally diagnosed her with Leukemia. They said she required a bone marrow transplant as treatment, so they tested me right away. I was not a match. Ben was home on leave, and gladly agreed to be tested, but when the results came back, he was not a match either. That's when the fear for my daughter's life became real.

The day Ben received his blood results telling him he was not Ashley's father is etched into my brain like a bad dream. He cornered me in the hospital corridor, informing me that his DNA did not match Ashley's, and I was in a state of shock. *Sort of*. Apparently so was he, because the anger on Ben's face was more than I could bear. He'd never laid a hand on me in all the years we were together, but at that moment, I instinctively brought my hands up to cover my face because I

knew I deserved it. A burst of air whished across my face as his fist slammed into the hard concrete wall behind me, then he was gone. Since the incident, I've spoken to him only to give him updates on Ashley. I need to face him, but first I need to tell Ashley the truth. I'm sure she's going to hate me too, but Its time for honesty, no matter the consequences.

I finish baking the muffins at Beans and Buns, the cafe I own with my friend Harper. After the divorce, I needed something in my life, and baking had always been my escape, so I persuaded my best friend to take a chance with me. Four years later we have a blossoming, quaint little place where you can get caffeinated, and indulge in things like cinnamon buns and freshly baked muffins. "Morning Honey, sorry I'm late. Matty's home sick from school today." My best friend since high school comes bursting through the door, her usual bubbly self. She is also a single mom, and Matty is the most adorable six-year-old boy you could ever meet. "Do you need to be home with Matty?" "No sweetie, I dropped him off at my Mom's, no worries." She waves me off and dashes into the back to put on her apron. "You go see that baby girl of yours. I got this." She mutters walking past me, then stops short with scrutinizing eyes. "What's wrong? You're a hot mess. Is Ashley okay?" "She's okay. Maybe the stress is starting to catch up to me." I can't control the tears welling up in my eyes. "Na-ah! You need to sit down and tell me what's going on."

She leads me to one of the small wooden tables we have set up for our customers, then steps over to the door and flips the hanging sign from open to closed. "What's going on?" She takes a seat across from me. I bury my head in my hands as the tears attempt to break through once more. "I'm guessing Ben was not a match?" She rubs my arm, and I shake my head. "Not quite!" "What does that mean?" "It means I've made a huge mess of everything." I take a few napkins from the holder to dry the tears that are streaming down my cheek. "What's going on Sarah? Come on; you know you can talk to me." Harper has always been there for me, and I'm really in need of a friend right now. Someone that doesn't hate me. "Ashley... She's not Ben's." I sob, watching as her eyes grow

wide. “What?” She cries after she lets the information sink in. “Ben is not Ashley’s father,” I repeat. “Who?...What?” She stutters just as the chimes on the front door ring.

Brad enters the store, and its like I see a ghost. My stomach flutters as I glance up to meet his dark, pissed off eyes. My heart beats like a drum, and I feel a panic attack coming on. He stands in the doorway like a stone statue with an intimidating scowl on his rugged face, and I have to close my eyes and remind myself to breathe. *God, he’s perfect.* All the air leaves my lungs, and my knees go weak. *Thank god I’m sitting down.* His face is even more handsome than I remember, in fact, he’s insanely hot. He’s wearing a few days of scruff on his square jaw, and I imagine how it would redden my skin if he kissed me. His tousled black hair is a little shorter than he used to wear it, maybe a bit thinner, but still plenty to run my fingers through. He glares at me, studying me, and his eyes take me back to a place and time where it has no business going. All the suppressed emotions tear right through my core, and I need to stop. Stop thinking about the way he kissed me that night like I was the only girl in the world. There’s a heavy stirring down south as I remember the way he worshipped my body like no other. Harper looks to Ben and then back to me, her eyebrows widen, and the stunned expression on her face tells me she understands when she whispers. “Holy Shit!”

## CHAPTER 3

### BRAD

Everything moves in slow motion as I stand in the doorway, gazing into her piercing blue eyes. Her pink, heart-shaped lips that I know taste like sugar make me lick my own. Her bouncing, waves of golden hair tumbles around her pale, soft skin. She is as stunning as the day I met her, her beauty second to none. All I want to do is capture her up into my arms, and never let go. But the sadness I see in those sparkling ocean eyes reminds me of the betrayal.

I urge my feet to move to where she nervously sits. “Brad fucking Thorensen, I never thought I’d see you again,” Harper bounces from her chair to greet me with a devilish grin. “Harper, Its good to see you. You look well,” I remark before glancing back at Sarah, where she sits like a frozen lake. “Well, I’ll just get you guys some coffee, and leave you to it then,” Harper mumbles, and I don’t miss the wide-eyed look she shoots Sarah before scampering away.

We study one another for a long minute as if we’re locked in some grade school staring contest. “Brad!” She whispers, and nods her head, motioning for me to take a seat. I feel lousy because she looks terrified. The chair scrapes loudly against the floor when I pull it out to sit across from her, making her jump. Harper returns placing two cups of steaming coffee on the table in front of us. Sarah opens her mouth to speak, but nothing comes out but a quick puff of air. Harper senses the magnitude of the situation because she quickly bolts away again without another word. “Brad...I just...I’m...”

She's trembling and at a loss for words, staring down at the table. "What the fuck, Sarah?" I slam the table with my fist, regretting it immediately when her body flinches. I take a deep breath, trying to reign in my temper, and I grab some napkins from the holder to wipe up the bit of coffee that spilled. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that." "I didn't know Brad, I just found out, and I'm sorry." "So you've said," I say matter-of-factly. "Brad, when I found out, I was just as shocked as you." She scowls at me and damn if I don't want to kiss it off her face. "Were you?" I raise an eyebrow, as I watch her stare down into her coffee cup. "You want the truth, Brad? Fine! I've always wondered if she was yours. What was I supposed to do, ask my fiancé for a blood sample to see if our baby was his brothers? You were gone, and then he was gone, and it was just Ashley and me." A pang rushes through my chest at the thought of her alone, and raising a baby. "Brad, I didn't know what to do, so I did what I thought was best for my daughter." "Does Ben know?" "Yes, and before you ask, no he didn't take it well." "What about Ashley, does she...?" Tears well up in her eyes, and her fists clench as if she's trying to will them away. "She does not, but I am telling her today. Whether you're a match or not, she deserves to know." I nod, trying to remain angry but at this moment all I want to do is take away her pain. "I'm going to the hospital now to talk to her. I will speak to the doctor today and let him know you can come in to have your blood tested tomorrow if that's okay with you?" "Do you want me to come with you now?" A barrel of nerves flushes over me at the thought of meeting my thirteen-year-old daughter for the first time. "No! I need to face her first. She is already dealing with too much. I know she'll need time." "Tell me about her, please." Suddenly the hurt and anger dissipate, as I try to imagine my sweet little girl. Does she look like her beautiful mother? Maybe she has a bit of my stubborn temperament. I wonder if she has Sarah's eyes or my sense of humor? I've just discovered her, and the threat of illness taking her away is too much to bear. The resentment I've been harboring falls when I see the pain etched across Sarah's fragile face. I imagine the hell she's been going through, the guilt she's been carrying. I'm not sure if I can ever get past this with her. I'm torn, loving her and hating her at the same

time. But one thing I know for sure, there's a sweet, innocent little girl, lying in a hospital bed, and I vow to do anything I can to help her. I haven't even met her, yet I know I already love her.



## CHAPTER 4

### SARAH

I speak with Dr. Collins, explaining the situation, and he's very sympathetic. He assures me this is not the first time he's seen something like this and says that Brad can come in first thing in the morning for a blood test. Brad and I exchanged cell phone numbers before he left the Bean this morning to find a hotel room. I shoot him a text, taking the chicken shit route, so I don't have to interact with him. **Dr. Collins said you could come in tomorrow at 8:00 am if that's good for you.** Bubbles appear almost immediately on my phone. **I'll be there!** Short and cold, but what did I expect. Did I think he'd throw his arms around me and be thankful for his newfound family, and we'd all live happily ever after? I slide my phone back into my pocket and make my way to the pediatric ward.

"Morning Mrs. Thorensen!" I'm greeted by Ashley's nurse, as I walk past her station. "How's she feeling today?" I ask, hoping Ashley had a good night. I usually call for an update before the sun rises, then head to the Bean to do some prep work before Harper comes in to open up. We talked last night about hiring some more help at the Bean until everything settles down. We already have Emily, a lovely older woman who works part-time for us, but we need more help because I'm starting to wear down. I normally arrive at the hospital by ten, so I can have breakfast with Ashley. Sometimes I head back to the Bean later in the afternoon for an hour or two just to give Harper a break so she can go home and spend some

time with her son. Then I return to the hospital and spend the rest of the evening here with Ashley. Harper has been taking the bulk of the hours at the Bean, and the last thing I want is for both of us to get burnt out. Ashley insists she's a big girl, and there's no need for me to stay with her all day. But I love our together playing games, watching television or just quietly reading books. *She so precious to me, and I don't think I could go on if something happened to her.* I Push the horrible thought from my mind, needing to stay positive for both of us.

I laugh to myself when I enter the room and find Ashley with her cell phone glued to her ear, totally ignoring the annoyed nurse who is trying to take her vitals. She smiles, and holds up a finger, letting me know she'll be off in a minute. Ashley is a typical, sweet, energetic thirteen-year-old girl, who loves spending time with her friends. Lately, they've been a little too boy-crazy for my liking, but then I think back to when I was her age. *Enough said.* She loves doing homework, which is the total opposite of me when I was a teenager, and she spends most of her spare time reading or playing video games. "I gotta go, my Mom's here." She hangs up the phone and grins when I hold up the bag of freshly baked cinnamon buns. "Hey sweetheart, I have your favorite." I pass her a chai tea latte and pull the buns from the bag, setting them on the rolling tray in front of her. "How are you feeling today?" She sighs. "I feel fine, and I wish I could get out of here." She pouts before taking a sip of her latte. I want to reassure her everything is going to be okay. At least there's hope that Brad will be a match.

I stand and walk over to close the door after the nurse leaves, giving us some privacy. "What's wrong Mom?" She asks with a curious look on her face. I slide my chair closer to the bed, taking her hand in mine. "We need to talk about something, and It's probably going to be a bit of a shock." I mumble, inching closer to her. "Mom, why are you so nervous? You're starting to freak me out." "Someone I know is getting tested tomorrow to see if he's a match." Her face scrunches up in confusion. "Honey, I don't know how to ease into this, so I'm just gonna say it." I take a deep breath. "Ben is not your real Dad." I swallow hard, waiting for her reaction,

but her face is unreadable as she sits silently. “You know how Dad has mentioned his brother a few times?” She gives a slight nod. “Uncle Brad, Right?” I nod. “Well, before your Dad and I married, Brad and I...” I can’t find the right words. “I’m sorry, I didn’t know until your Dad’s blood test came back. Ben will always be your Dad, but he’s not your blood father, I’m so, so sorry.” Her eyes grow glossy, and the expression on her face is all screwed up with confusion, and shock. I reach for her arm, and she gently pulls away, crushing me. “I know you’re probably angry and confused, and I will answer any questions that you have, but I needed to tell you the truth.”

She remains statuesque for the longest time, not saying a word. “Sweetheart, talk to me, I want to know what you’re feeling.” “I’m a little shocked right now, and I’m not quite sure how I’m feeling, to be honest.” She gives me a half shrug. “So Brad, my real Dad, is going to see if he’s a match? He doesn’t even know me.” “Honey, he flew here from California as soon as I told him.” “So he’s here now?” She asks, surprised. “Yes, I saw him this morning, he’s coming here tomorrow to be tested.” “Huh!” She lets out a harsh breath, and lifts her head to look at me. “How is Dad taking it, he called and said he would be here later to visit, but he never said anything?” “He didn’t take it well, I’m sure he’s hurting. Ben will never stop loving you or being your Dad.” Ben was a terrible husband, but he always tried to be a good father. It was difficult with him away from home so much, but I know in Ashley’s eyes, Ben will always be her Dad. Ashley snuffles trying to fight back tears. I sit on the edge of her bed, engulfing her into my arms. I feel like the worst Mom in the world. The guilt is excruciating, knowing I’ve caused her this pain. With everything this sweet little girl is going through, this is the last thing she needs. I can’t stop the tears running down my cheeks. “It’s okay Mom, everything is going to be okay.” I have to laugh because I am the one who should be consoling her, yet she is the one who always tries to make me feel better. “Can I meet him?” She questions. “Of course you can, he’s looking forward to it.”

We talk some more, and of course, she has a million questions. I'm amazed at how well she is taking it. A little while later my phone dings, and I pull it out to find a text message from Brad. **Have dinner with me?** My heart begins to beat a little faster, and I hesitate with my reply. **I cant, I usually stay here at the hospital until 8:00.** His response is quick. **I'll bring food to your place at 9:00.**

## CHAPTER 5

### BRAD

I'm not sure why I texted her and asked her to have dinner with me. But after sitting in this crappy hotel room all damn day, feeling sorry for myself, and trying my best to hate her. I end up cursing "Yours truly" and regretting every decision I've ever made. There is still so much more I need to know, and more we need to discuss, so why not over dinner? Honestly, the thought has crossed my mind that Ashley could be mine. Hell, I've even fantasized about it. Dreamt that one day Sarah and I would find our way back to each other, and finally have a life together. The day I left, leaving her behind, was the day I stopped living. Yes, there's been women in my bed, but I don't do typical dating or hearts and flowers romance. I use a high-class escort service when I need a quick fuck. *God, I'm so fucked up.* I get what I need, and It's convenient, discreet sex with no strings. I always make sure the women are satisfied before I kick them out, I'm not a monster. I mean if a woman is willing to spend hours looking good for me, come to my house to pleasure me, the least I can do is make sure they're happy. But It's always Sarah's face I imagine when I close my eyes, and Sarah's name on my lips when I come. Sometimes I get an odd look afterward, but I pay the women well, and they tend to not ask questions. I've never even had one serious relationship in my life, I don't do romance or need useless conversation. It's quite funny that I'm a heart surgeon, yet I don't possess a heart myself. Maybe It's

because I lost It so long ago? I've dedicated my life to my work, and that has made me a damn good doctor. I genuinely care for my patients, but I've been growing tired of it all these past few years. I'm exhausted at pretending, acting as if I'm happy with my life. I need more. I've always needed more, always striving for more, yet never finding contentment. Maybe Its time I get what I want.

So that's how I ended up standing here on Sarah's front porch, holding Chinese takeout and a cheap bottle of wine. The lights are on, and there's rustling coming from inside while soft music plays in the background. Sarah opens the door just as I'm about to knock, looking sexier than ever in a pale yellow sundress with her golden blonde locks tied up in a messy ponytail. She's a goddess, her face void of make-up, tiny freckles dusting over her bare shoulders, making me want to take a bite out of her. *So damn beautiful.* I hold up the bag of takeout and a bottle of Riesling as a peace offering. She grins, snagging them from my hand before moving aside to let me in.

Her house is tiny and charming, decorated with a cheerful, southern flair that matches her personality. I walk into the open spaced living room and immediately get a warm feeling. The walls are painted in a cream color and there's an oversized, pale blue couch in front of the picture window. It's warm and bright and inviting, and It feels like a home full of love. But what catches my eye is the wall full of pictures, all of an adorable, vibrant, happy young girl. Ashley at different ages, some at the park or the beach. She's smiling in every one of them, a smile identical to her beautiful mothers. *God, she's a carbon copy.* Suddenly, I feel bitter thinking of all the years I missed watching her grow up. I feel like Sarah is reading my mind as sadness begins to cloud her features. "She's a lovely girl." She mutters staring down at the floor shyly. "I don't doubt it. You raised her." I'm quick to respond, and she blushes at the compliment. "I told her about you, she want's to meet you." My mouth curves into a smile at the thought of meeting her. "I can't wait."

Sarah's quiet at first, almost nervous, as she sets out some plates for the food. I pour us a glass of wine, hoping It'll

relax her. “Tell me all about her.” We sit down to eat at the small farmhouse kitchen table. Sarah’s entire face lights up, and once she starts talking about Ashley, she can’t stop. “She sounds perfect, just like her Mom.” Her cheeks blush and her mouth curves into a shy smile. “She is perfect, but she’s a teenager, a teenager going on thirty, enough said.” My grin quickly falls as I ponder the fact that I know nothing about children or teenagers. “What kinds of things does she like?” “She loves spending time with her friends. She likes books, music, and school. She just loves life. Oh, and all of a sudden her and her friends have become a bit boy crazy.” I scowl, suddenly irritated at the thought of some hormonal little teenage prick touching my daughter. *Not if I have anything to say about it.* “I’m not sure I approve of that.” She giggles and shakes her head at me. “I’m not sure either one of us has a choice in the matter. Discovering boys was bound to happen sooner or later.” Her smile fades. “There’s a dance next month at school, she’s wants to go so badly. We’ll have to see what happens.” I notice tears threatening in her eyes. “Brad, I can’t lose her, she’s everything.” I rise from my seat and wrap my arms around her where she sits, and all I can think is, please god let me be a match.

We munch on orange chicken and pot stickers, and before I know it, we’ve drunk the entire bottle of wine. I get the sense Sarah hasn’t had a relaxing evening like this in a long time. *I wish it could be like this every night.* I have a million questions about Ashley’s illness and treatment, and I make a note to call my friend back in Los Angeles in the morning. He specializes in pediatric oncology, and I need to ensure Ashley is getting the best care possible.

Sarah begins clearing the plates, and I follow her every move in a trance. She is the only woman I’ve ever wanted. It has always been her. I place the empty wine glasses on the counter next to the sink where she stands. Settling next to her, our shoulders brush as we stare out the window into the darkness. My pulse quickens, as I reach my hand out to brush back a loose piece of hair from her eye, just needing to touch her. My heart is pounding out of my chest. She keeps her head down, avoiding eye contact with me, but I’m desperate to see

her face. I notice when her breathing becomes labored, she's flustered, and I know she feels it too. The spark, the energy that exudes between us, however you want to explain it, It's still there, has always been there.

She turns her body toward me, gazing up with heated eyes, and I can't seem to move a muscle. She inhales a deep breath, pulling her bottom lip between her teeth, tempting me even more. I can't fight it anymore when her cheeks pinken and her lips part. I lower my head and cover her mouth with mine, stealing her breath away. She lets out a tiny gasp, her body still tense. She relaxes into me while I trail lazy kisses down her neck. "You are even more beautiful than I remember." Her hands quickly fist my shirt, and she slips that greedy little tongue into my mouth, lighting my nerve endings on fire. I tighten my grip on her waist, and my pulse kicks into overdrive when I inhale her sugary sweet vanilla scent. She deepens the kiss as though she can't get enough, firing shivers down my spine. She moans into my mouth and it travels straight to my dick. She reaches up and wraps her hands around my neck, pulling me in tight against her breasts, and I can feel her chest rising and falling heavily. I curve my hands around her breasts, my thumbs circling her hardened nipples through the thin material of her dress. Her hands roam everywhere, my chest, my waist, my back, lighting up every inch of my skin with desire. I'm beyond turned on, and I'm sure she can feel my erection straining against her core. I shouldn't want this, but my body still craves her after all these years.

All I can hear is *Nine Inch Nails* pounding in my head. "We shouldn't be doing this." She murmurs, breaking the kiss, panting and breathless. She's probably right, but I don't want to stop. "You should hate me." She whispers. I loop my arms around her waist and pull her in tight, rocking my hips into hers, letting her feel my desire. My cock is excruciatingly hard against her center, and I feel the heat radiating from her sex. "Does this feel like I hate you? I could never hate you." I tilt my head down, my mouth finding that spot on her neck just below her ear. "Jesus, I want you so bad. I'm going to worship you then I'm going to fuck you until you can't remember your



name.” “Yes, please,” She whispers as blood surges through my cock. My dick is so fucking hard the zipper of my jeans is cutting into it. I have to will myself not to lose control or this night will be over before It starts. I lift her dress and slide two fingers into her panties, knowing what I’ll find. I run my fingers through her warm, wet, heat and she moans my name onto my lips. Her hips buck when my thumb grazes her clit, and I know I’m driving her crazy. “Brad, Please!” I lift her up, and she instinctively wraps her legs around me. “Bedroom,” I demand then spank her ass. “Hallway,” She gasps inhaling a breath, before attacking my lips once more.

With her arms still around my neck, we stumble down the dark hallway, while she continues to feather soft wet kisses across my face and neck. “Jesus Brad, I never thought this would happen again.” She nods toward the bedroom door on the right. We burst into her room, and I gently drop her onto the bed. I swiftly strip off my shirt, and let my jeans drop to the floor. She kicks off her sandals then tentatively begins to remove her dress. I can’t take my eyes off of her when her perfect mouth-watering breasts spill out. The moonlight trickles through the openings of the blinds, casting a light glow into the room and I’m reminded of that night fourteen years ago. “I’ve waited so long for this Sunshine, tonight we’re taking our time.” The vision of her is a dream come true, her juicy breasts, those tight pink nipples, begging for my mouth to be on them. “I’m going to worship every inch of your body, Sunshine.” I release her ponytail, allowing her hair to fan across the pillow as she lies back on the bed. “Brad!” One lone tear drop escapes from her eye, so I kneel on the bed and climb up her body to kiss it away. “Don’t cry, Baby. I’m here now.”

Kissing her tenderly, I start from her forehead continuing down to her lips. I kiss her face, and her neck, not wanting to miss one single spot, needing to make up for all the missed years I should have been kissing her. A tiny whimper escapes her lips when I take her delicious, tight nipples into my mouth, sucking firmly, giving each one my attention. “Yes, please Brad,” Her little moans have me dying to be inside her. Her body arches into my touch as I reach down to cup her sex, still

focusing and teasing her succulent breasts and cherry pink nipples. I rise off the bed feeling the loss of her warm body immediately, our eyes lock onto each other. She squeals when I gruffly pull her body down toward the edge of the bed and fall to my knees in front of her. “Brad,” My name falls from her lips like a plea. I slowly Draw her lacy beige panties off and take my time slowly kissing up and down her smooth legs until she groans. “Brad, please, I need you.” I drape her legs over my shoulders, tugging her hips to the edge of the bed enough so that her ass is hanging off, and I spread her wide. I take my time inhaling her addictive musky scent, before I brush the seam of her pussy all the way up to her clit with my tongue, lapping up her sweet nectar. She tastes just like I remember, sweet like honey, salty like the beach. I quickly lose myself, in her taste, her scent, her sounds. Devouring her like I’ve been craving this for a million years. My hard on is raging, and pre-cum is seeping out uncontrollably as I feast on my woman. *My woman!* I’m so worked up, a slow tingling forms at the base of my spine, and my limbs begin to tremble. I could live in this moment for the rest of my life. “Yes, Brad, Yes!” She cries out, her body writhing and arching. Her fingers rummage through my hair, her nails digging into my scalp and her words turning into unintelligible gibberish as she wildly rides my face. “Oh my god, yes!” She frantically pulls at my hair, my neck, my shoulders. Her hips buck, as she grounds her pussy shamelessly against my face, begging for more. “Yes, please don’t stop.” *I’ll never stop.* I plunge two fingers into her wetness, curving them for her pleasure, working her to the edge of bliss, as I suck and lick and nip at her clit. “Fuck Brad, Yes, I’m...” Her pussy clamps down hard and she shatters. Her legs tremble as she continues to pulse and a rush of warmth spills onto my hand. I stand, placing my fingers into my mouth, and suck them clean. I relish the beautiful, satisfied look upon her face. I know at this moment, if she lets me, I’ll do everything in my power to put that look on her face every day, for as long as I live.

## CHAPTER 6

### SARAH

How is it, I just had the orgasm of my life, and I'm ready to go again? It's been so long since a man has touched me, and no one has ever loved me like Brad. The last time I had sex was two days before my marriage ended, the day I found Ben in our bed with another woman. That was the final straw. The day I kicked him out of our home, and never looked back. After that, I spent my time focused on my daughter and determined to make my business successful. The sex in my marriage was anything but spectacular, not like it was with Brad that night fourteen years ago, and nothing compared to right now, in this bed. Is it sad that the best sex of my life was in the front seat of a rusty old pick-up truck? Sex with Ben, when he was home, was never anything special, he took his pleasure, never worrying about mine. Sometimes I orgasmed, and sometimes I didn't. Maybe it was my fault for never complaining, but he sure never went out of his way to make sure I was satisfied. Sex was just never on the forefront of my mind, maybe because my heart just wasn't in it from the beginning. When I found out I was pregnant, I was already engaged to Ben, and with him deployed for such a long time, I didn't know what to do. Should I have written him a letter? *Dear Ben before you go and put your life on the line, can you send home a blood sample to make sure the baby is yours?* Or Should I have called Brad? *Hey, Brad, I'm sorry to shatter all your dreams but can you drop out of medical school because you might be the father of my baby?* So I did what I had to do for my daughter, damn the consequences. And as far as the future, I know the reality is that Brad will leave again and go back to his life, and I'll go back to mine. It's just sex, so why not let myself enjoy tonight with him, relieve the guilt and the

worry, even if it's only for a little while. Brad has unleashed the beast, and she is starving for him.

My heart thrums and my mouth waters at the Greek God, hovering at the edge of my bed. His eyes are dark and full of desire, and I feel like I'm about to be eaten alive. He licks his fingers clean of my juices, and I've never seen anything more erotic. He looks better than a delicious five-star-meal, standing in front of me with his hard body and California tanned skin. I want to taste him and suck him and fuck him. I want it all. His tight black boxer briefs do nothing to hide the significant bulge he's sporting. *Yummy!* His body is different now, harder and more defined. His broad shoulders, his sculpted chest, and the rigid lines of his tight abdomen tells me he probably works out often. I lick my lips letting my eyes feast on his fuck-me body. He is all man and all mine tonight. His deep blue eyes are the same, and I still find myself getting lost in them. He removes his underwear, his magnificent cock springing to life, and like a hunter, his eyes never break from mine. His hand smooths over his long, thick cock with slow, lazy strokes, and a fierce, predatory look on his face. My heart pounds, as I scoot back on the bed in anticipation, knowing I'm about to be ravaged.

He reaches down into his jeans lying on the floor and pulls out a condom, before slowly climbing onto the bed. He crawls up my body with such hunger in his eyes, kissing me as if he needs me more than his next breath. His kisses are coarse and addictive, leaving no room for air. I can taste my flavor on his lips, and it makes me even wetter than I was before. Never before have I felt so wanted, so needy, and I just want to lick every inch of him like a postage stamp. "You're so fucking beautiful, Sarah, I've thought about you, this, every single day." "Brad," I plead, wanting him inside me fast, his confession almost too much to bear at this moment. I gasp when the harsh stubble on his face brushes across the delicate skin of my breasts. The gentle touch of his fingers, taking their time massaging and caressing every inch of my body, lighting my every nerve ending on fire. "Brad, please," I sigh beneath his touch. "I know what you need Sunshine, let me worship you tonight." He has my body writhing and twisting beneath

him as he touches and licks every inch of my skin, owning me, possessing me. My body hums like a sexy song as he teases and sucks and fingers me. "Please Brad, fuck me." He's reduced me to begging, and I don't care, I just want his beautiful, thick cock inside me.

He positions himself between my legs, lining his cock up to my center, and my muscles shake in anticipation. He hasn't even entered me yet, and my entire body is trembling uncontrollably with desire. Painstakingly slow, he strokes the broad head of his cock through my slick hot pussy as if he's painting a picture. "Brad, please fuck me." I groan. "So eager Sunshine, I fully intend to fuck you all night." My lips fall open, and I gasp, trying to suck air into my lungs as he pushes into me inch by glorious inch, till I'm stretched and filled in the most delicious of ways. "So good, Brad!" I whimper, the sensation is pure pleasure. I'm quickly on the precipice of orgasm, and he's not even moving yet. "Brad you need to move, please," I beg, and the bastard chuckles before tipping his head down to take my tight, sensitive nipple into his mouth, sucking hard. "Brad, I'm so close," When he repeats the same motion on my other nipple, my fingers dig into his shoulders. Arching my body into his, I fight to breathe. Then I'm coming. Hard. All over his cock. The sensation paralyzing when he begins to thrust, long, deep, violent thrusts, fucking me through the swell of my orgasm, making my entire body quake. "Yes, yes, yes, Brad!" The pressure builds again, clawing its way out from deep inside. Then I'm falling, spinning, floating and a million tiny stars explode across my eyes. I'm swallowed up by the pleasure. "Brad," Over and over, I chant his name. His thrusts are deeper than anyone has ever been, merciless, sending me over the edge once again, as the pressure of my orgasm rolls straight into another. "Fuck Brad, yes!" My brain renders completely blank as I become a slave to my own body. Shattering into a million pieces, I have no choice but to surrender, the pleasure leaving me breathless...speechless...boneless... He slams into me one more time, then stills. His eyes squeeze shut, and the muscles in his neck tighten as he lets out a deep, raspy, groan and chases his pleasure. His hips thrust once, twice more as his body shudders through his climax. "Jesus Christ, Sarah!" He

grunts into my neck as he continues to pulse inside me, before collapsing on top of me. He rolls off and deposits the condom into the waste basket next to the bed, then stretches out next to me, and engulfs me in his arms. We lay spent for a long while, our limbs tangled, my head resting against his chest, both of us completely sated.

“Sarah, what happened between you and Ben?” My body stiffens a bit because we don’t need to be airing things out right now. Tonight is just sex, and I’m wondering why he wants to know, or why he even cares. I slip from his embrace and roll onto my side, propping my head up on my elbow to face him. “I knew it was never going to work between us. I should never have married him.” I take a deep breath and let out a sigh. “When Ben finally came home I had just had Ashley. He was ecstatic and insisted we get married right away. Ben I... I always knew there was a chance you could be the father, but I didn’t know what to do.” I lower my head, unable to meet his eyes. He should be angry, yet here he is in my bed looking at me like I hung the moon.

He wraps his strong arms around me and threads his fingers through my hair. “Sarah, we were young, and we all made mistakes. I left, never giving a second thought to whether the baby was mine or not. I always knew it was a possibility. I could have called you. I knew we didn’t use a condom that night, and when Ben called to tell me he was a Dad, all I did was congratulate him. Talk to me Baby, tell me the rest.” He coaxes, after a long pause, toying with a lock of my hair. I pinch the bridge of my nose and cover my head with the palm of my hand feeling a migraine coming on. “We married a week later at the courthouse, and things were good for a little while. Not long after, Ben became distant, and he started going out a few nights a week, supposedly with his buddies. I was busy focusing on a new baby and taking care of my sick Momma.” “I’m sorry about your Mom. I never got to tell you that.” He interrupts, and I remember feeling hurt that he didn’t call. “Thank you, At least she was able to enjoy Ashley for a little while before she passed away.” I pause, my eyes beginning to sting with tears. “I was so lonely, and Ben was all I had. When Ashley was about six months old, he

came home and told me he was going to deploy again, and he was making the Marines his career. Of course, I supported him, but it was hard on me with a new baby and no family support. He would come home for two or three months at a time, then leave again. Those times were so difficult for me. I should never have married him, and I knew it was never going to work. He was never here, and even when he was, he was checked out. Don't get me wrong, he tried to be a good dad to Ashley when he was home, but honestly, he was a terrible husband. He slept his way through half this town. How stupid was I to think things would change once we were married? The last straw was when I came home early from work one day and found him fucking someone in our bed. I threw him out and immediately filed for divorce. It's been Ashley and me ever since. He loves Ashley, but he was never wired to be a family man, I guess. The simple truth is, I married him for all the wrong reasons."

"Come here." Brad insists, pulling me into his arms. "You're a strong woman Sarah, and you deserve so much better." I scoff at him. "I'm not that strong, believe me." "Sarah!" He growls. "You raised Ashley on your own with no support. You run a successful business, and you put everyone first before yourself. Maybe you need to let someone take care of you for once." All he is doing is making me hopeful for what could be, but I have no right to think about those things. I won't let myself imagine what it would be like to have a strong man in my life, someone who puts me first, someone I can lean on when times are tough. I've fantasized many times about what it'd be like to have Brad in my life. How nice it would be to come home after a long day and have him there waiting for me. He'd make me laugh and keep my body warm at night.

I fall asleep wrapped in his warm embrace, needing to feel his bulkiness against my body, and dream of things I know can never be. Wishing it could be the two of us for the rest of our lives, but I know it's just a fantasy. Brad will be gone again, soon, and I need to keep my focus on Ashley and getting her healthy. No matter how much we've always wanted each other, it's not meant to be. *Maybe another*

*lifetime!* But as Ben rustles me from sleep and kisses me with such unbridled passion, his body pressing me down into the mattress, his thick cock moving inside me. “Oh Brad,” At this moment, nothing exists around us. “How did I ever let you go?” He whispers in my ear. And when our fingers entwine as he pushes into me and we make slow passionate love, a shimmer of hope nestles in the back of my mind. And as I writhe underneath him, It’s all just too much. I rummage for the strength to breathe because It’s all too overwhelming. I know I’m falling in love with him all over again, and it’s terrifying, especially knowing I’ll be left broken hearted once again.



## CHAPTER 7

### BRAD

I'm startled awake by the annoyingly loud ring of a cell phone. Sarah jumps from the bed like her body is on fire. "Hello!" There's silence in the air and panic on her face as she listens to whoever is on the other end. "Oh God! Okay, I'll be right there." She hangs up and frantically runs around the room, rummaging clothes from her dresser. "Fuck, fuck, fuck, this was a mistake, I should have been there!" She shouts, before running into the bathroom and slamming the door shut. I throw on my clothes and anxiously sit at the edge of the bed, waiting for her to come out. When she does, her eyes are red and puffy like she's been crying and I cringe at the despair written across her face. "Sarah, what's wrong?" I stand and wrap my arms around her, but she gently wriggles from my embrace. "Sarah, What's going on?" I demand. "It's Ashley. I need to get to the hospital." She snaps at me, swiping her keys and phone from the dresser. "Stop, You need to calm down and tell me what's going on." I insist, clutching her wrist as she reaches for the door handle. "Talk to me Sunshine, please, I want to help." She falls into my arms, her body trembling, and breaks into uncontrollable sobs. "Ashley's having severe stomach pain and they're not sure why. She's asking for me, and I need to go, now." She states, her agitation obvious. "Well, you're not driving like this. I will take you in my car." I insist, and surprisingly, she doesn't argue. "Oh My God Brad, I can't lose her." She cries in my arms, leaving me feeling powerless.

When we arrive at the hospital, Sarah sprints directly into Ashley's room, and I stay back at the nurse's station not

wanting to upset Ashley any more than she already is. She hasn't even met me yet, and this is undoubtedly not the time. I overhear one of the doctors speaking about Ashley's case to one of the nurses, and I make my way over to him. "Hi! I'm doctor Thorensen, Ashley's Umm...Uncle, can I speak to you about her condition?" He raises an eyebrow at me. "Sir, being a doctor, I'm sure you understand that I cannot talk about her case without permission." Sarah strides out from Ashley's room, looking a lot calmer than she did before. "Hi Doctor Collins, can you tell me exactly what's going on with Ashley?" "Sure, Let's go talk in the waiting room, where Its private."

We follow him down the colorless hallway to an uninviting white box of a room, set up with a small cushioned couch and a few chairs, and nothing else. "Is it okay to speak freely with Ashley's uncle here?" He asks, as Sarah and I take a seat across from him. "Yes, of course, He's, Um, the person we spoke about this morning. Brad this is Dr. Collins." Recognition dawns on his face, and he just nods. "Understood! So Ashley has been having some abdominal pain, which became pretty severe tonight. We did a cat-scan of her abdomen and found that her spleen is a bit swollen, which can be a normal side effect of her disease. We gave her some pain meds, and she seems to be resting comfortably right now. It could get worse, but we'll just watch her before we consider further treatment. I think Its best if we get Dr. Thorensen tested as soon as possible. If It's okay, I can take him down to the lab right now, and put a rush on the test. We can probably get the results as soon as tomorrow." I bounce from my chair. "Let's do it now Doc." "Okay, let me just stop at the nurse's station, and then we can go to the lab."

He leaves the room, and I kneel down in front of Sarah, her face is as white as a ghost. "Sunshine, look at me," I take her chin between my thumb and index finger lifting her face to my gaze. "This is going to work, I can feel it. Everything is going to be okay, I promise. We are going to make sure she gets the best care. We'll get through this together." She doesn't seem convinced, as she anxiously rises from her seat. "I need to call Ben, maybe Its best if you're not here. I'm afraid of

what will happen if he decides to come up to the hospital.” She crosses her arms, and I can see her trying to close herself off again. I place my hands on either side of her face and tenderly kiss her forehead. “I’m not going anywhere Sunshine, and I’ll handle Ben. We can all be adults about this and put Ashley’s needs first. You don’t need any added stress.” She gives me the slightest nod as her eyes swim with tears. “Thank you, Brad. I’m sorry for dragging you into all of this.” “Don’t you know Sarah? I’d do anything for you.”

The simple blood test took no time at all, and Dr. Collins assures me that the results will be back quickly. I stop at the cafeteria to purchase two cups of coffee for Sarah and me. When I return, I see that Sara is still in the room with Ashley. I don’t think it’s an appropriate time to interrupt, so I ask the nurses to let Sarah know I’ll be in the waiting room.

I must have dozed for a little while, because the next thing I know, Sarah is rubbing my shoulder to wake me up. “Sorry, I fell asleep, is everything okay?” I stand and rub the sleep from my eyes. “She’s feeling much better. They gave her something to make her comfortable.” “That’s great news, Is Ben coming tonight?” “I called and explained everything to him, I told him there was no reason for him to rush up here, so he decided to come tomorrow.” I put my arm around her shoulder. “I should take you home to get some rest?” I suggest, worried about how pale and tired she looks. “Okay, but first...” Fidgeting nervously, she lets out a long sigh. “Ashley saw you before, pacing outside her room, and she asked if she could meet you before we go.” My eyes grow wide with surprise. I honestly didn’t think I’d be meeting my daughter tonight. “Uhh, sure, if that’s what she wants, then I’d love to meet her.”

It’s funny how many patients rooms I’ve entered over the years, but this time is so much more significant, and life-defining. I take tentative steps behind Sarah letting her go first, considering I’m scared shitless. Ashley’s tiny body lies helpless in her hospital bed with her back facing the door, and she seems to be asleep. Sarah takes a seat next to her as I stand back waiting for approval. “Hey Sweetheart, Are you still up for this?” Sarah whispers as she pets her hair. “I feel better.

I'm just tired." Ashley's tiny voice squeaks out. "Brad's here if you're still up to it, otherwise we can do it tomorrow." "No, now is good." She states with a determined voice and begins to sit up with Sarah's help. Sarah adjusts the bed, and when I catch sight of Ashley's tiny, frail body and pale complexion, worry punches me square in the gut, knocking all the wind out of me. My heart hurts, and I'm suddenly finding it difficult to breathe as I stare down at this young, beautiful little girl who's fighting for her life. *My little girl!* It strikes me at this moment, I will fight, I will sacrifice, I will give it all up for her, for both of these women. I resolve then and there to do anything for them, and I want these girls in my life. Sarah waves me over and Ashley pats the bed, coaxing me to take a seat at the edge. The cute little smirk on her face reminds me of Sarah's. The color of her eyes are a bit lighter than her Mom's, but there is no mistaking she belongs to Sarah. She doesn't seem nervous, meanwhile, I'm silently freaking out. My heart is racing like the wind as I take a seat at the edge of her bed and smile nervously at her. "Hello Ashley." "Hi," She squeaks back. "How are you feeling now?" I ask, not sure how this conversation should go. "Much better now. I just wanted to meet you and say thank you for trying to help me." She seems so mature and so sweet and so perfect, I can't help but grin from ear to ear. "Ashley, I would do anything for you." "Well, even if it doesn't work out, I want you to know how much I appreciate you coming here to try." She murmurs with a discouraged look on her face. "Hey Angel..." I place my palm on her leg, even though she is under a blanket I feel the need to touch her for the first time, just to make sure she is real. "Listen, I know this is a shock for both of us, but I am truly honored to meet you, and I want you to know that I have a good feeling about this working out. You're going to be out of this place, and back at school with your friends, in no time." She gives me a reassuring smile. "I know you're tired, and I think you should get some rest, but I'd like to stop in again tomorrow if that's okay with you? I'll even bring you some ice cream if you tell me your favorite flavor." She beams at the mention of ice cream. "I'd like that. Mint chocolate chip is my jam." I chuckle, and she holds out her hand like she wants me to give her a handshake. Instead, I rise from the end of the bed,

and lean over to drop a kiss to the top of her head. “Get some rest and I’ll see you tomorrow Angel.” I pace out of the room wishing I could change places with her, and for the first time in a long time I pray to God, pray that I’m a match and I can save this beautiful precious girl.

The drive home is quiet, and the exhaustion on Sarah’s face is unmistakable. “She’s your spitting image. She reminds me of when I first met you,” I mutter, placing my hand over hers. She doesn’t pull away, but she’s tense. “She’s my everything Brad, and I don’t know what to do.” “It’s going to be all right, Sarah,” I say sternly. “You keep saying that, but you can’t know.” “I know,” I whisper, trying to convince myself just as much as her. We pull up in front of her house, and I turn off the engine. “Do you want me to come in?” I ask, noticing her hand is already on the door handle. “I think you should go, Brad. It’s late, and I need to call Harper to see if she can open up the Bean in the morning. I want to let her know that she should hire those two high school kids that applied for a job last week. Right now, I need to be spending my time at the hospital.” “I understand, I can go there and help out if you need me to?” Sarah chuckles. “Famous heart surgeon moonlights as a barista? I don’t think that’s in your repertoire,” I smirk at her. “Yeah, maybe that’s not such a good idea, but I would try for you.” She gives me a forced smile. “Goodnight Brad, I’ll talk to you tomorrow.” “Okay Sarah, get some sleep, and call me if you need anything.” She escapes from the car without even so much as a second look back. Fleeing my presence as if I’m some kind of leper. But as I watch her go inside, one thing I know for sure, If she thinks I’m going to give up on us this time, she’s dead wrong, because I am never letting her go again.

## CHAPTER 8

### SARAH

I wake groggy and in a panic. Reaching for my phone I hastily scan to see that the time is only nine, and the tension in my body slowly begins to relax. I want to get to the hospital early today, but I'm in no shape to rush this morning, so I make a quick call to the nurse's station to check on Ashley. After her nurse reassures me that she had a peaceful rest of the night, I feel much better. I text Ashley letting her know I'll be there soon, and then fall back onto my pillow with a sigh. Thoughts of last night with Brad come rushing back. His sexy, masculine scent is still on my sheets, and his handsome face etched into my mind. The warm kisses, his hot-as-fuck body all over mine and the way he made love to me, engraved into my thoughts. It was only supposed to be one night so why can't I erase his kiss from my lips, his touch from my body?

I take a much needed, long, hot shower and make my way to the Bean, in need of a shoulder to cry on and the pressing desire for caffeine. When I arrive at the shop, Harper is behind the counter assisting a customer with her usual friendly attitude. I make myself a latte with a double shot of espresso and grab some treats to take up to Ashley. "Hey girl, you hanging in there? You look like shit today." "Um, thanks." I deadpan. "I didn't get much sleep last night, and I couldn't even muster the strength to put make-up on today." "Pfft, you don't need make-up honey. I just meant you look tired. How's Ashley doing?" "I called this morning, and she's much better, but I hope they figure something out soon. Thank you for

opening the shop, buy the way. I'm sorry to put so much on your plate right now." "Nonsense, that's what friends and business partners are for." A tall, lanky gentleman strolls in for coffee and a bagel, so I give Harper a hand making the coffee and ring him up. "Have a great day," I tell the man, striving to muster up a smile, but failing miserably. "So did Brad get tested yet?" Harper asks after the customer leaves. "Yes, he was with me last night when the hospital called, and I was in a panic, so he drove me there." I feel Harper's eyes on me as my cheeks heat. "He was with you last night?" She questions with raised brows. "We had dinner together." "Aaand?" She singsongs, waiting for a response with her arms folded. "Sarah Thorensen, you little hussy, you slept with him?" She says, more as a statement than a question, as I nervously bite my cuticles. "Yes, but we didn't sleep much." I give her sly smirk. "Okay, I need more info missy." I grin at her. "I'm not giving you details Harper." She scowls at me. "My vagina is currently full of cobwebs. Please throw me a bone. The only excitement I have in my life is the twenty minutes at night I get to spend with BOB. Was it good, did he take you to the promise land?" My cheeks grow pink and my mouth slowly curves up into a smile. "Maybe... A few times." I hold up five fingers. "Or maybe it was six." "Bitch, I hate you. Are you guys like a thing now?" I shake my head vigorously. "No, It was a one-time thing. He's only here for Ashley, and then he'll be going back to his fancy doctor life in Los Angeles. I don't need my heart broken again." "I always thought you guys should have been together, not you and Ben. I can't believe you didn't tell me you slept with him back in the day." She tilts her head, eyeballing me as I pull some muffins from the case trying to avoid her inquisition. "I'm sorry Harper, I didn't tell anyone, I felt too guilty. It was one night. I would say it should have never happened, but then I wouldn't have been blessed with Ashley. It was a mistake, but It was the best mistake I ever made. Did I love him? Maybe, but we're adults now, and we both have our own lives. My only concern right now is getting Ashley well." She pulls me in for a hug. "I understand, but I get the impression there are some real feelings there. You deserve more in your life." "Never going to happen." I shake my head adamantly. "Understood. Now go see that precious

girl of yours and give her a big hug from Auntie Harper.” “I’m sorry to put so much on you right now with the shop.”

“Nonsense, Emily is coming in to close up later, and I’m going to call those two teenagers and ask if they can start tomorrow, so don’t worry, it’ll all work out.”

I arrive at the hospital by eleven, a bundle of nerves as we wait for the test results. When I walk past the window of Ashley’s room and peek in, the sight knocks me on my ass. Ashley is sitting up in her bed, her tiny fingers punching at a video game controller, as she yells at the giant television screen perched in front of her bed. “I’m out of ammo; I’m out of ammo!” She chants. But the kicker is Brad sitting alongside her, also pouncing a controller, in unison. They’re laughing and playing as if they’ve known each other their whole lives. I step back from the window not wanting to be seen and tip-toe back across to the nurse’s station. Ashley’s day nurse, Vicky, glances up at me with a devious grin, telling me she is not an innocent in this covert mission. “Hey Vicky, Do you know how long they’ve been together in there?” She smiles sweetly. “Dr. Brad has been here all morning. I think he’s excited to get the results. He’s a very nice man, even brought us all coffee this morning.” *Dr. Brad?* “He surprised Ashley with a new Xbox system, so I jacked the portable TV from the doctor’s conference room. You girls are fortunate to have a man like that in your lives.” My cheeks flush, and I’m about to set her straight that he is not ours, but I realize it’s too long and personal of a story to tell.

I step back toward the window curious to watch them interact for a few more minutes before I go in. They’re both wearing headsets, and playing a military game, shooting and blowing lots of things up. They seem to be working a mission as a team as they kill their enemies. My loving, open-minded daughter doesn’t seem fazed at all by the fact that she’s hanging with her birth father. A man she didn’t even meet until last night. Brad looks just as relaxed and accepting of the situation, moreover, he seems happy about it. There’s a sudden pang of guilt in my stomach as regret hits me like a brick. I screwed up so bad. Why didn’t I come clean in the beginning? I should have never married Ben, and I should have been



honest with him and Brad. “Behind you, behind you!” Ashley shouts, waking me from my thoughts. “Gah, I’m shot, no lives left,” Brad exclaims, then glances toward the window and gives me a sexy lopsided grin.

They both remove their headsets when I enter, two sets of eyes study me, gauging my reaction. “Hi, Mom!” Ashley giggles, looking so much better today, once again, resembling my vibrant, happy baby girl. “Hey sweetheart, I see you guys have been up to no good.” “Brad bought me an Xbox.” She beams proudly. “And he’s surprisingly good at video games.” I frown at him. Brad stands and clears his throat. His jaw tightens, and he looks suddenly nervous as he gauges me. “I’m sorry if I overstepped, I just want to get to know her. I hope you don’t mind? I just thought...” He fidgets nervously. “Its fine brad, I mean the gift is way too generous, but I’m glad to see you two getting acquainted.”

Ashley’s mouth curves into a smile and her eyes drift towards the bag I’m holding. “Is that blueberry muffins?” I return the smile and rest a kiss on the top of her head, before handing over the bag. “Of course it is. Do you mind if I speak to Brad outside for a minute?” Her eyes twinkle. “Uh oh! Someones in big trouble.” “I should go anyway.” Brad mutters. “Nooo! What about our rematch? This place is so damn boring.” Ashley exclaims. “Hey, language Miss!” I lecture, only to get some serious eye-rolling sent in my direction. “I only said damn, Mom.” “I’ll come back in, let me just talk to your Mom for a minute.” Brad offers, tousling Ashley’s hair before stepping out of the room. “Mom, It’s the most fun I’ve had in this place since I’ve been here, don’t be mad at him. I like him,” She whispers the last part to me. Ben was a good Dad in the sense that he always provided for Ashley, but he never spent much time getting to know her or play games with her. “I’m not mad honey, I promise, we’ll be right back.”

“I’m sorry, I just want to get to know her.” Brad shoves his hands in his pockets. “I’m not mad Brad, I was just a little surprised to see you here this morning. I’m a bit shocked at how accepting she is towards this whole thing.” “Look I don’t know what role I’m supposed to play here, but I want to get to

know her, develop some kind of relationship with her. I know we haven't talked about that yet." He places his arms on my shoulders and lowers his face close to mine. When his sexy, musky scent hits my senses, I go weak at the knees. An electric current runs through my body, and I'm Unable to help my self when I run my palm across his rock hard chest, just needing to touch him, immediately feeling a heaviness between my legs. *God, I need to get a hold of myself.* "Its fine Brad, I'm taking my cues from her right now, and if It makes her happy then it makes me happy. Thank you." He smiles. "She's a special girl." "She is." I whisper, our faces so close I think he might kiss me. *Please kiss me.* A throat clears behind me and I turn to see Dr. Collins. "The results are back." My fists clench and I swallow down the lump in my throat. Dr. Collins mouth twitches, then he smirks. "He's a match."

## CHAPTER 9

### BRAD

I hold her tight as her entire body trembles, afraid she'll fall if I let go. Tears spring from her eyes as Doctor Collins directs us back to the waiting room. "Since she just finished a round of chemo, she's already had the preparative regimen, so we'd like to do the procedure right away." "Oh my God, yes!" Sarah whimpers and I curl my arm around her waist tight. "We'll do your procedure first Dr. Thorensen. I can have the rest of the team here by this afternoon. The procedure is quick, and you'll need to stay overnight." "Fine." "You'll just be a little sore and tomorrow someone will need to drive you home." "I'm ready. Let's do this." I say excitedly. "Perfect, we can have our girl set up with a catheter and receiving the marrow by tonight. Its similar to a blood transfusion, and will be quick and simple for her. We'll continue monitoring her cell counts over the next few days to make sure it's working, and she may even be able to go home in a week or so. After that, we'll need to see her here at the hospital on a daily basis over the next few months to monitor and test her, but we can go over all that later." Dr. Collins places his hand on Sarah's shoulder, and she peers up at him. "She's a strong young lady, and she's going to come through this like a pro." Doctor Collins lets out a nervous chuckle when Sarah stands and hugs him. "Brad, can you be back here around three for the procedure?" "I'll be here."

Dr. Collins leaves us, and I turn to face Sarah. "It's gonna be okay Sunshine, I promise." Sarah wraps her arms around my waist and squeezes tight. Her glossy eyes gaze up at me. "Brad, I...I don't have any words to describe how

grateful I am. I will never be able to repay you for this. You're saving her life." "Baby you don't need to repay me, I'm just so thankful that I can help her." She peeks up at me, and I have the sudden urge to kiss her, but this is not the time, so I take a step back. "You can stay at my house for a few days. You'll be sore, and you won't be able to drive. Let me take care of you." I don't need to give it a second thought. I want to be near her. "Okay, I'll go pick up my things from the hotel, and there's something I need to take care of before I come back."

I pull into the familiar gravel driveway, and the memories come flooding back as I stare at the worn out farmhouse. Most of them shitty, reminding me of why I left in the first place. Ben owns the house where we grew up now, and he can have it. When my parents died, I forfeited my half to him. I don't need the money or the house or the memories. I climb the rickety steps of the wrap around porch I used to play on when I was a kid. Noticing the same weathered screen door, still hanging by a thread. I pause for a moment, trying to collect myself. I take a deep breath before I bang my knuckles on the wooden edge of the door. "Yeah, who is it?" A gruff voice rumbles from inside. A second later Ben appears on the other side of the door in worn jeans and a USMC T-shirt with a picture of a skull on the front. Between his size and all his tattoos, he's a scary looking dude. I'm preparing myself for a well-deserved punch in the face, but when Ben catches sight of me, he just swings the door open and steps aside, inviting me in.

The door slams shut and he marches past me. I follow him into the kitchen, neither of us saying a word. He snags two beers from the fridge, and I hold my hand up to decline politely. "I can't. I need to be back at the hospital." He grunts, handing me a bottle of water instead. "I heard...Sarah called me a little while ago." He grumbles, then takes a large swig of his beer. "Look Ben I..." He holds up his hand, cutting me off mid-sentence, which I'm kind of glad for because I'm not sure what to say anyway. He pulls out a kitchen chair, flipping it around and sits on it backward. He motions for me to take a seat. "Look, Brad, I've been doing a lot of thinking. I should be kicking your ass right now, but honestly, I'm more pissed at

myself. Should you have slept with my fiancé? Probably not, but we both know Sarah should have ended up with you and not me.” “Ben...” “We both had a terrible upbringing, and I know it’s not an excuse...I mean somehow you overcame it, but I let it define my life. I was never the settling down type, but you, you’d make a good husband and a good father.” “Ben you are a good dad. That girl loves you and she needs you, she’ll always need you. I’m not here to take anything away from you. You’re her father.” He takes another swig from his beer and slams it down on the table, his glossy eyes staring down at the bottle. “She is the only good thing in my life, and it hurts to lose that.” “You’ll never lose that Ben, she loves you and she depends on you, that’s not going to change.” “Look, Brad, I will always do anything for that little girl, you’re right, that will never change. But she needs stability in her life and so does Sarah. Sarah always tried to make the best of everything, but I failed them both. I’m just not wired like that, and I hurt them.” “Ben you did the best you could.” He cocks his head and chuckles. “Brad I’m leaving again in a few weeks, and I need to know that they are going to be taken care of. We both know I should never have married Sarah, it was a selfish thing to do. I’m not the settling down type. I took advantage of her, and I destroyed our marriage. I guess karma is a bitch. I need you to promise me you’ll treat them well and take good care of them the way they both deserve. If you want my forgiveness, then that’s what I need you to do. Promise me, Brad. They deserve to be treated like queens, and I know you’re the one capable of that. I was not...” I hate seeing the pain etched on his face. He shrugs his shoulders and pounds his finger to his chest. “I was not capable of that. Now if you’ll excuse me, I need to go see my little girl and wish her luck before her procedure.” With that I am dismissed, no handshake or bro hug, just a silent goodbye.

## CHAPTER 10

### BRAD

Soft classical music hums through the speakers as I anxiously lie here on a stretcher in the surgical holding room. An IV is being inserted into my arm by a focused red-headed nurse, while the chirpy one with wavy blonde hair checks my blood pressure. “Looks like you have company.” The blonde nurse smiles up at me just as the red-head pinches my arm with a needle. I glance up from my arm, and my heart thumps in my chest at the enchanting sight. My sexy girl is standing there in a grey hooded sweatshirt and form-fitting yoga pants that hug her tight ass, showcasing her sexy toned legs. Her golden locks flow across her shoulders, and she looks like an angel. Her infectious smile always seems to brighten my day. Standing next to her is Ashley, in pink pajama pants and a grey T-shirt with a huge smiley face on the front, shyly clutching her IV pole. My face lights up, and I know my smile reaches my ears at the sight of them. These feelings I’m having are so enormous it makes my chest ache. “Looks like someone planned a successful prison break.” I snicker, eliciting a tiny smirk from Ashley’s sweet face. Sarah cautiously moves toward me after the nurses excuse themselves, while Ashley stands in the background nervously bouncing on her feet. “We wanted to see you before you go in,” Sarah mutters as her cheeks heat with a lovely pink blush. “I’m glad I got to see you guys too.” The warmth in her eyes is unmistakable, and it’s inspiring. “Brad, I just wanted to say thank you again for this, you have no idea...” Her eyes gloss over when she speaks. “You don’t have to thank me. I’d do anything for you

guys.” Sarah nervously rocks on the balls of her feet. “Well, good luck and I’ll come down to see you after the procedure. Ashley would like to speak to you in private before you go in. I’m going to wait in the hallway. I’ll see you after.” Her lips tenderly caress my forehead, sending a chill down my spine. Ashley moves closer to me, and Sarah smooths her hair with her palm before leaving us.

“Hey Angel, how are you feeling?” “I’m okay. I wanted to see you before the procedure. The nurses only gave me fifteen minutes, before they send out the SWAT team.” She rolls her eyes, and I can’t help laughing at her cuteness. “This is going to work Angel. You’ll be out of this place before you know it.” I speak confidently, wanting to ease her worry. She gives me a tiny nod in agreement. “Sooo... I wanted to say thank you for everything. You don’t even know me, and you didn’t have to...” Her eyes glisten with tears, and it tugs at my heartstrings. “Angel, I would do anything for you. I know we met under unusual circumstances, but I want to be in your life if that’s okay with you. Ben will always be your dad, I understand that, and I don’t want to take that away from you. But I want to be there for you too, whenever you need me. Sweetheart, the first time I saw you, I knew that I loved you.” Tears slide down her cheeks, and I brush them away with my thumb. I never want to see this girl cry. “Do you love my mom?” *Well, I did not expect that question.* I pause for a moment trying to choose my words carefully, but there is only one honest answer. “Angel, I’ve loved your mom from the very first time I saw her, and yes, I still love her.” She rests her tiny hand on mine. “She’s still in love with you too. She didn’t tell me, but I can see the way she looks at you.” I chuckle. “Now don’t go playing matchmaker just yet. Your mom and I have some things to talk about once everything settles down. But first, we need to concentrate on getting you better.” I poke her nose playfully with my finger eliciting a shy smile. Doctor Collins walks in glaring at us with a tiny smirk on his face. “Are you supposed to be out of bed young lady?” Ashley rolls her eyes again. “See, SWAT.” “I think we could take him.” I wink. She says goodbye and grins at Dr. Collin’s before strolling out of the room. “You’re a lucky man Dr. Thorensen. She’s an extraordinary girl.” “That she is Doc. Let’s do this!”

I wake groggy, to the annoying beeping of machines. There's a dull ache of pain in my hip when I try to move my body. A dark-haired nurse is standing over me checking my vitals. "How are you feeling Dr. Thorensen?" "Fine, my throat is a little dry, could I get some water, please." I rasp. "Sure I'll get it for you, and I just gave you some medicine for your hip pain. It looks like you have a visitor, but I'm only giving you five minutes." I glance up and catch sight of Sarah standing in the doorway as the nurse types something into her portable computer. On her way out she holds up five fingers at Sarah, letting her know to be quick.

"Hey, how come your down here. I thought you'd be upstairs with Ashley?" I gaze up and take a moment to appreciate her natural beauty. Sans make-up, baggy work-out clothes, with her hair up in a messy ponytail, yet she is the most beautiful woman I've ever laid eyes on. Sarah steps from the doorway, strolling toward me and I'm surprised the monitors don't beep uncontrollably the way my pulse races. "I just wanted to come down and check on you, see how you're feeling." Sarah draws a concerned face when I move my position and immediately wince at the sting in my hip. "I'm fine, just a little groggy." The nurse returns with a plastic cup of water and hands it to Sarah. She holds the straw near my mouth, and I take a long sip letting it soothe my throat. Sarah runs her soft fingers through my damp hair, making my skin tingle. Her eyes lock onto mine, and It's as if we're having a conversation without words. "Sarah, we need to talk." She responds nervously and her cheeks pin-ken, but her soft lagoon colored eyes sparkle. Sadness clouds her features as she nervously chews on her bottom lip. "Brad, we can talk later. You need to rest, and I need to get back upstairs. I just wanted to make sure you were okay and let you know the procedure went well." She rests her palm on my chest, over my heart, and I place my hand on top of hers. She quietly stares down to where our hands are connected. "Sarah!" I whisper, almost as a plea, and she restlessly backs away. "Brad, I should get back to Ashley, they're going to be starting her treatment soon. I'll check in with you later when you get a room." With that, she turns and walks away, leaving me wondering what our future holds.



## CHAPTER 11

### SARAH

The drive to my house is tense, the silence building a wall between us. I feel like Brad is standing there with boots on ready to kick it down, but I'm not so sure I'm ready. We both have things we want to say, but neither one of us says anything. "How are you feeling?" Long Awkward silence. "I feel fine." "How is Ashley feeling?" "She's doing well. She's been asking for you." More awkward silence. When we arrive at my house, Brad offers to sleep on the couch. "I already made up Ashley's room. You'll be more comfortable." I insist. "Thank you." His gaze follows me, as I grab some extra blankets and towels from the linen closet. "If you need anything else, just let me know." I try and make my escape from the room. "Sarah, we need to talk." He stands in front of me, and I let out a sigh. What the hell possessed me to let him stay at my house? Am I crazy? Apparently, I just like torturing myself. I don't want to talk about what's going to happen when its time for him to leave again. I'm still not over him, probably never will be, and every day is another day closer to more heartbreak.

"Brad, there's nothing to talk about, I'll always be indebted to you for all that you've done, but I understand you need to get back to LA soon." I try brushing past him to exit the room, but he snags my wrist, halting me in my steps. He pulls me into his hard body, and I gasp. My traitorous nipples tighten to the point of pain, and I'm craving his kiss. Yearning for his touch. "Sarah, you don't understand, I don't want this to be over. I'm not letting you go this time." He says sternly, as his thumb caresses my cheek. I strive to pull away from

him, but he just draws me in tighter. *I never want him to let go.* My skin tingles and a sudden warmth emerges between my legs. I take in a deep breath and close my eyes tight, trying to summon the strength to speak. “Brad, this will never work. You have a life in California, and my life is here, so we’re back to the same old issue. We had fun the other night, that was never our problem. We always knew how to have fun together, but we’re not good for each other. It’s time we get back to reality, and right now my only concern is Ashley. My only wish is that you’ll have a relationship with her in the future because she honestly likes you, but I don’t expect anything from you.” I won’t allow myself to have expectations from a man ever again. The men in my life have only left me disappointed. My Daddy abandoned us when I was a little girl, Brad broke my heart, and Ben, well, that was a total shit-show. I am not about to let anyone hurt me like that ever again.

I attempt to slip from his grasp, but he pushes his solid body against mine, backing me into the wall. “Brad, what do you want?” I whisper. The heat in his eyes undeniable, and I don’t think I’m even breathing. “I want you. I want you bad Sunshine. I want your lips on mine. I want your body under me. I want you Sarah, and not just for today. You’re my soulmate, and this thing between us is meant to be.” He smashes his lips against mine, kissing me as if he needs it more than his next breath. His warm mouth devours me as our tongues remain caught in a wild dance. My traitorous body lets me know how much she appreciates it, as I boldly grind my hips against him. The need between my legs becoming almost unbearable. The kissing is hard and possessive as if he’s claiming me. But I know I will never be his. I shouldn’t give into this so effortlessly, but my entire body melts right into him, not giving up one ounce of fight. As bad as I want this, I’m never going to be his, and inevitably, I’ll be left crushed once more. I’m not sure my heart can stand it again. It’s stupid to let myself believe for a second that this could work between us. I’m only setting myself up for an emotional meltdown, I can’t afford right now.

I break the kiss, breathless and wanting, and place my palms on his chest to push him away. He’s not having it when

he crushes his mouth back onto mine, leaving me no choice but to perish in the fire. Reaching down between us, I cup his hard dick, and he groans into my neck. He's kissing and licking and sucking. Lighting my skin on fire, and throwing all my rational thoughts into a tailspin. I fall to my knees and quickly pull down the black track pants he's wearing. I let out a giggle when I realize he's commando and his eager cock springs to life, nearly smacking me in the jaw. "Sarah... Wait a second..." I look up at him and shake my head vigorously from side to side. Seeing the surprise on his face only fuels me more. I grin up at him and then my greedy mouth is on his magnificent cock. The salty, delicious taste of his pre-cum sends a charge straight to my pussy, making me hot and needy. I waste no time licking the length of his cock. Teasing him with the swirl of my tongue, I hollow my cheeks and suck him hard. I do my best to ignore my gag reflex as I take him deep, loving the way his velvety steel hits the back of my throat. He places his palms on the wall above me to steady himself. "Sarah Jesus, Baby!" He groans deep from his chest, and I can feel his legs tremble. I love the way he tastes in my mouth. He begins to lose control, and his hips begin to thrust with my motion, a little deeper each time, enticing me even more. "Fuck, Sarah, It's too good." I pick up the pace and double my efforts, sucking him like a demon trying to suck the life from him "Baby stop I'm gonna..." I go full-on, no hands, and grab his ass hard, letting my nails dig into his backside. The muscles in his ass tighten, and his thighs shake as he drives his cock in and out of my mouth. "Fuck Sarah, Fuck!" His fingers grip my hair tight, and his balls hit my chin, just before warm streams of cum jet into my mouth. I release him and smirk up at his delirious gaze, wiping my mouth with the back of my hand, feeling empowered and extremely wet.

He takes a moment to compose himself, and reaches under my arms to lift me off the floor. Then his mouth is on me once more, savagely kissing me. My hands fist his hair and my fingers dig into his scalp. He breaks the kiss, and his eyes bore right into my soul. "Sarah, I love you." The spell is broken. I look around, suddenly realizing where I am and what just happened. *I'm so embarrassed, Christ! I just blew him in my daughter's bedroom. What kind of mother does that?*

Brad's pants are pooled around his ankles, and I was just about to hop on his dick and ride him like a bronco. *What the hell is wrong with me?* I have to get out of here because clearly, It's impossible to think straight when I'm near this man. He's my kryptonite. "Brad, I can't do this. I need to go. Just make yourself at home and call me if you need anything." *Need me.* "Goodbye!"

I drive straight to the Bean, needing to clear my head. There's a mass of customers when I arrive, so I quickly jump behind the counter and assist Harper with the rush. "Hey girl, is everything okay? I figured you'd be at the hospital by now." She studies me for the longest time as I make two vanilla lattes for a tall, brown-haired woman wearing a navy business suit. "Everything's good," I bark at her, a little too gruffly, averting eye contact as I continue to work. Once the crowd begins to die down and Harper and Emily seem to have things under control, I make myself a latte and plop myself down at one of the tables. "Hey, what's going on with you?" Harper takes the seat across from me with her cup of coffee in hand. "Emily's got this under control for a few minutes, so spill it, sister." She glares at me, waiting for a response. "Come on Sarah. We've known each other since grade school. What's up with you and baby daddy?" I stare down to where my hands clutch my coffee cup, the same hands that held Brad's dick an hour ago. "Brad's staying at my house for a few days, and I can't seem to think straight when I'm around him. Now I'm sorry I asked him to stay." "It's serious between you two?" I let out an exasperated sigh. "Well, considering I just gave him a blowjob in my daughter's bedroom, I'd say yes." I deadpan. She lets out a deep, loud burst of laughter, alerting everyone in the shop. "You kinky little hussy!" She cries, holding her stomach as she laughs at me. I groan, burying my face in my hands. "I can't stop these feelings. When he's around, all I want to do is climb him like a tree. I'm only going to get hurt again once he leaves. I should never have slept with him in the first place." "You love him." "Yes, dammit!" The answer flies out of my mouth quickly. "I always have. He says he loves me, though, it was right after a stellar blowjob." She gives me a big cheesy grin. "You make Mamma so proud." "I'm trying to be serious here." I scowl at her. "So why don't you talk to him? Why

can't you give it a try and see where it goes." Everyone knows long distance relationships don't work, Harper. We love each other, but I also know it isn't enough. "I'd only be setting myself up for some serious hurt. I don't have room in my life right now for a man, especially when I know It's only going to end with me curled up on the floor in a ball, with a bucket of tears by my side. My heart won't survive this time." "Look, Sarah, you've closed yourself off for a long time. Maybe Its time you take a chance on something good." "I have not...I don't want... I don't need a man in my life to be happy, I've got Ashley." I insist, sounding a little too annoyed. "Honey, you deserve to be happy. What happens when Ashley's all grown up and goes away to college? Then you'll have to get a cat, and I hate cats." "Huh? You have two of them." "I just don't want to see you miss out on something good, just because you're afraid of taking a chance. In the end, we only regret the chances we didn't take."

## CHAPTER 12

### *BRAD*

The past two days we've been like two ships passing in the night. Sarah is up and gone before the sun rises, coming home late, and immediately escaping to her bedroom. She's avoiding me, and I need a game plan. Things are already in motion back home. I just need to convince her that this is happening. Tonight I've decided to make her a romantic dinner for one, executing the perfect Chicken Piccata, because it's her favorite. I'm not sure if she's ready to talk yet, so I set the table for one. Wanting to do something special, I place a few candles and two dozen red roses in the center with a card that reads: **I won't let you run from me.** I put a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc on ice and shoot her a text message. **Dinner is in the warmer when you get home. Tell Ashley hello for me. I can't wait to see her. Have a good evening, Brad.**  
**xoxo**

Her car pulls in the driveway around nine, and I decide it's best to stay in my room. I want her to enjoy her dinner and relax a little. She needs some space, time to think about what she wants before I confront her. I will slowly work her into the idea of us being forever because I know she's afraid I'm going to walk away again. I'm going to show her that everything has changed for me. I'm serious this time, I love her, and I won't lose her again. I lie in bed listening to her stir around the house. It's quiet for a while and then I hear the clearing of plates, so I assume she's eaten the dinner I made her. I smile to myself and wonder what she's thinking, but I suppose giving her space is the best for right now. I hope that she will come to me when she's ready.

Footsteps shuffle down the hallway and I listen intently when they stop right in front of my room. My heart races at the thought of her so close, and I wonder what she is thinking. I want to throw the door open, wrap her in my arms and kiss her madly. There's a whisper of a knock and I startle. "Brad?" She mutters my name so softly. I jump up and swing the door open, and my legs go weak at the sight of her beauty. She's wearing a silky champagne-colored robe that falls to the center of her thighs. *Little Vixen!* Her wavy locks fall softly around her shoulders. Her taut nipples are flashing me like high-beams through the smooth silky fabric. I'm practically salivating at the thought of what she has or does not have on underneath. I've never had a foot fetish but staring at her bare feet; her toenails painted bright pink, is causing my dick to pitch a tent in my shorts. I struggle to tear my eyes away from her gorgeous body and force my gaze up to meet her face. Her red-rimmed eyes tell me she's been crying, and my first thought is to hurt the fucker that did this to her. But I'm the fucker responsible for her misery.

"Thank You for dinner. It was very thoughtful. No one has ever done anything like that for me." I want to tell her I plan on doing things like that for the rest of her life, but I'm not sure she's ready to hear that yet. "It was my pleasure Sunshine. I hope you enjoyed it." She blushes. "It was amazing." She nervously shifts from one foot to the other, staring down at the floor. "Um, I was wondering if you'd have coffee with me. I brought home some dessert...Apple turnovers?" The corners of my mouth quirk up. "I would love to, let me just throw on a T-shirt." I'm bare-chested in a pair of basketball shorts, and the way her eyes gravitate to my chest, and she licks her lips, tells me she doesn't want me to. "I'll be right out."

## CHAPTER 13

### SARAH

The air shifts the moment he walks into the room, and I immediately sense him. I busy myself at the counter making coffee, trying to ignore the magnetic pull I feel when he's near me. My back is to him, and I jolt when he steps over and places his hand on my shoulder. That one soft touch lights my skin on fire. "Brad we should talk." He snuggles his face in the crook of my neck. "We should and we will, but right now I want to be inside you." In an instant, his arms are around my waist, his warm bulkiness blanketing my back. Sweeping my hair over my shoulder, he rests his lips on that sweet spot between my shoulder and neck, the one that drives me crazy. "Brad!" I whisper. "Brad, what do you want?" "I want you, Sarah. I want to worship this sexy-as-fuck body of yours. I want to make you come with my mouth, and I want to sink my cock into that sweet pussy, so deep, and so hard, you won't be able to think straight as you scream my name over and over." *Yes please!* I'm barely breathing. "But if you tell me you don't want that, then I'll go, but you need to decide."

My legs are shaking, barely holding me up, and my clit is pulsing as fast as my heartbeat. I squeeze my eyes shut, willing myself to fight him off when all I really want to do is give in to this craving. "Brad!" I plead. "Please!" I beg, not even sure what I'm asking for. He spins me around, and I don't think I've ever seen his eyes so dark and full of need. It's thrilling, in fact, it sends a chill racing down my spine. The heat, the desire, is clear, but there's something else there too.



Love maybe, and It's terrifying. He has one hand on my hip and one hand behind my neck, when he dips his head down to kiss me. I regain some of my sanity and press my hands on his firm chest to ward him off. "No Brad, just stop, I can't fucking think straight when you do this." He staggers back a bit, more from shock than from how hard I pushed. "You don't need to think Sunshine. I'll never stop." I stumble past him needing to get away, but he's hot on my heels. When he seizes me by the waist, I shriek in surprise. "I can't do this anymore Brad, It hurts too much." He looks as pained as I feel. "This is never going to work, I'll only end up hurt." He reaches for my shoulder, and I jerk away like I've been stung by a bee. "Sarah, we need to figure this out once and for all. I'm not giving you up this time." "No Brad, this is over, You need to go back to your life, and I need to move on."

I'm bent over with my palms on the kitchen table, my head down, trying to contain the tears. Brad loops his strong arms around me, drawing my body into his, and I instinctively mold into him like he's a memory foam pillow. He nestles his face into my neck and speaks into my ear with a low gravelly voice. "Sarah, I love you. I've loved you from the first moment I saw you. I've waited a lifetime. No matter how long we were apart or how far away from each other we were, I never stopped loving you. You've always been in my heart. I want to spend the rest of my life making you and Ashley happy and safe. My mission in life is to make you both smile every day. Make all your dreams come true. Give me a chance to show you how good it can be. I'll give it all up, I'll do anything, because you are the only thing that makes me feel alive. You make life worth living."

My sex is slick and ready for him. His words travel straight to my core. *Who needs foreplay?* I'm starving for him. I wiggle myself around, still in his arms, and lock eyes with him. "Brad, I want you too. Please." I'm aching to feel his thick cock inside me, one more time. The heat between us smolders too hot for me to resist. I don't stand a prayer, not that I want to. *One more time and then we're done.* His dark gaze, the raging bulge in his pants, and his possessive kiss, tells me how much he wants it too. "Is this for me?" He growls

when he slides his fingers into my soaking wet pussy. “Yes, Always you!” The fire between our bodies is blistering hot and I struggle to answer him. “I love that you’re always so wet for me.” He swoops me up by my ass with his muscular arms in one swift motion and sets me on the kitchen table. His eyes pierce into mine for the longest time, as if he’s trying to decide what to do with me. My legs are still wrapped around his waist, not wanting him to escape. I’m breathing like I just ran a marathon from the way he’s eyeing me. His gaze borders on half desire, half crazy person, and in an instant he’s on me. Capturing my mouth in a savage kiss, claiming me. The kiss is sloppy, needy, consuming, and neither one of us can get enough. I’ve never in my life, known passion like this. Never needed it, never wanted it, but with Brad I crave it like a junkie craves a fix.

He yanks the belt of my robe flinging it open, my naked breasts spilling out for him to explore. His quick hands reach down and grasp my thin, silky excuse for underwear, and the material digs into my hip when he savagely tears them off. “Hey, I really liked those.” I giggle. “I did too, they were very sexy.” He grins. “I’d hate to see what you’d do if you didn’t like them.” I joke, but his eyes are too dark and overflowing with lust for comedy. “You are mine Sarah, tell me you know this.” Then his mouth is everywhere, kissing, sucking, nipping, showing no mercy. His touch is rough and merciless, at the same time tender and soothing to my flesh. I’m drowning in him, and when he breaks the kiss, I groan in complaint.

Within seconds my back is flat against the kitchen table, and he sinks to his knees, settling his head between my legs. He swiftly tugs my body to the edge of the table and positions my legs over his shoulders. Wasting no time, he consumes me with his mouth and fingers. “Oh!” Propping myself up on my elbows, fascinated, I watch him eat my pussy. *So hot!* Unabashedly, I move against his tongue, needing more pressure, but he holds my hips down as I buck under him. *Bastard!* “Come for me baby, show me. Tell me you know you are mine.” My head flies back as his tongue circles and flicks my sensitive clit. My orgasm surges like a wave, from deep inside. My fists grasp the edge of the table, as I search for

something to hang on to. “God Brad, Yes, Yes!” I chant, riding his face lewdly, wickedly, and loving every minute of it. “Come Sunshine, come on my mouth.” And I do, like a shot, long and hard. My back arches off the table, the heels of my feet dig into his back, and my hands desperately fist his hair as I explode. Over and over, the pulsing lasts with no end in sight, as my thighs tremble around his ears.

I haven’t even come down from my high, then he’s on top of me, kissing me. Hard. I push my tongue into his mouth, hot to taste my pussy on his lips. *So erotic!* He impales me with his glorious cock so abruptly and deep, I bite my lip and draw blood. I fight to catch a breath. “You’re a goddess. I’ve dreamt about you every single night for the past fourteen years.” His thick, smooth cock pounds me, relentlessly. Driving so hard and so deep, all I can do is hold on for the ride. The table underneath me is shaking so much I’m afraid It’s going to collapse. “Brad!” I cry his name, over and over, as he thrusts his dick in and out of me, possessing me. Sending waves of bliss to every nerve ending in my body. “Holy... Shit,” I moan and curse as another orgasm begins to cultivate out of nowhere. His hand reaches down between us and magically manipulates my clitoris until I splinter apart. My orgasm violently slams down on me as he continues his brutal fucking. He thrusts his hips a few more times then buries himself deep inside me, letting out a sexy growl. The muscles in his neck tighten, and his head falls onto my shoulder. His body goes rigid, and he grunts and curses, chasing his bliss. His cock pulses inside me as he fills me with his warm cum.

Time stands still, and he holds me tight for the longest while. I groan from the loss when he slips out of me. He helps me off the table and when I stand I feel his warm semen dripping down my leg. *What the fuck is wrong with me?* “Fuck, fuck, fuck.” My body grows cold as the realization hits me like a bucket of cold water. “Sarah, what is it?” I quickly move to the other side of the table and swipe my robe up off the floor. “Jesus Brad, we didn’t use a fucking condom again.” The sound of my voice shrieks through the entire house as I hastily close the belt of my robe with shaking hands. He’s quick to my side, wanting to console me. I hold my palm up,

halting him in his tracks. “Don’t Brad. Just don’t. Everything is not going to be okay. I’m not on the fucking pill, and here we are making the same mistake fourteen years later.” “You need to leave. We can’t keep doing this. We’re over.”

## CHAPTER 14

### BRAD

My eyes grow wide as I stare at her fiery expression. If she thinks we're over, then she's fucking crazy. I can't believe I forgot to use a condom again. I lose my fucking mind when I'm with this woman. *Fuck! She looks pissed.* I stride toward her, circling my arms around her waist and brush my lips against her cheek, trying to comfort her. "Fuck, Sarah, I'm sorry, I wasn't thinking, but whatever happens we'll deal with it together." She slips from my grasp and takes a step back. The dark fury splashed across her face is alarming. "We... are not dealing with anything. We... are done. I can't do this anymore, Brad." She shouts, waving her hands in the air like a lunatic. She squeezes her eyes shut and inhales a deep breath, trying to reign in her anger. "Brad, please, just go." I can see her eyes filling with tears before she turns and stalks down the hallway. Her words sound final, and they hit me like a ton of bricks as I watch her disappear. The bedroom door slams shut, the sound shooting through me like a bullet. I won't let her get away again. We will never be over.

I stalk toward her bedroom and tap lightly on the door. "Go away." I lean my forehead on the door. "Baby, open the door. We need to talk." I hear a whimper, and I just want to hold her tight and tell her everything is going to be okay. "No Brad, I'm done talking. I'll keep you updated on Ashley's condition, but you and I are over. Please just go." I pound my fist on the door. "Dammit Sarah! Open the fucking door." "Goodbye Brad," She rasps. *Never!* The silence from the other side speaks volumes. If she needs space fine, then I'll give her space for now. It will give me time to put everything into

motion, but she needs to understand I'm not giving her up again. Losing her is not an option. "Sarah, listen to me, I'm going to go, but you need to know that I'm coming back. We're going to have a life together. The life you deserve. Ashley too Baby, I'm coming back for both of you. Please don't give up on me." I wait for a response. *Nothing!* "I'm not going to say goodbye because this is not the end. I'll miss you and please know that I'm coming for you." I swipe my bags from Ashley's room and leave without another word.

I stop by the hospital to see Ashley before leaving town because I want her to know about my plan. "Ashley, I have to go back home for a few weeks, but I'm coming back." The sadness on her face breaks my heart. "Angel, I love you very much, and I want you to know that I'm in love with your Mother. I've always been in love with her, and this time I'm not giving her up." I tell her, producing a tiny grin from her lips. "I'm going back home to settle things and put my house up for sale. I'm giving up my practice and moving back here. So don't give up on me Angel, and please don't let your Mom give up either. I promise I'm coming back for you guys. I want to give you both the life you deserve." My career is important to me, but It isn't everything. Sarah and Ashley are everything. I just need to prove it to them. I let Ashley know we'll be keeping in touch and give her my cell phone number. "Call me anytime, day or night. We can still play video games together online whenever you want, and I'll still let you kick my butt." I kiss her cheek, and she rolls her eyes when I rub the top of her head and mess up her hair. "I'll see you soon Angel." I give her a wink, and I'm rewarded with a huge grin, letting me know she's on board. Everything is going to work out. I'm finally going to have a life that means something.

## CHAPTER 15

### SARAH

Five weeks have passed, and I haven't heard a word from Brad, not that I expected to. I'm trying my best to work through these feelings and just accept the fact that I fell in love with a man I can never have. *Maybe I should call him?* I always believed that he let me down, but perhaps it was me who let him down. When he left, I didn't even have the guts to fight for him. No one has ever fought for him. *I was too scared.* But why fight? That's what everyone does, they leave. Why fool myself into believing there'd be a happy ending for us? *Gah! My head is so freaking messed up right now.* I didn't realize how lonely I was until Brad came back into my life. But he's gone again, and it's so much harder to fool myself. I'll just continue to drag my broken heart around, hoping eventually, it'll just fade away. But late at night when I'm alone in my bed, all I can do is think about him. It's Brad's face I imagine when my hand slips underneath the covers. It's Brad's name on my lips when I come. It's always Brad when I dream of happy endings that will never be. It's Brad I'm thinking about right now as I sit on the edge of my bed staring at this stupid pregnancy test that Harper insisted on bringing over here this morning. I've been ignoring what I already know to be true. So I decide to pee on the damn thing, leaving it on the bathroom sink to deal with later when I'm alone. *Alone!* I raised one child on my own, and I'll figure out how to do it again. For now, I just want to enjoy this beautiful day.

So much has happened since Brad left. Ashley is out of the hospital and feeling stronger every day. The transplant seems to have been a success, though she still has a long road

to recovery ahead of her. We will have to wait a few months to make sure she is entirely in the clear. Last week the doctor gave her clearance to go back to school, and Ashley broke down with tears of joy. I know that Ashley and Brad have been communicating through text messages and I'm pretty sure she's been playing Xbox with him late at night when she's supposed to be asleep. She and I will have a conversation about that later. Not that I care if she talks to him, I do want them to have a relationship, but it's important for her to get proper rest right now. Not stay up all hours of the night playing video games. But today I'm just going to enjoy this moment, and the permanent smile spread across my daughter's face.

Today is the formal dance Ashley has been desperately hoping to attend. I'm having trouble holding back the tears at the fact that she is well enough to go. "Jesus Sarah, how do you not have a migraine right now?" Harper complains, as she hands off a can of hairspray to one of the girls like a baton, before taking a huge gulp from her wine glass. Harper and I shopped with Ashley all day last Saturday and found the perfect dress for the occasion. Ashley enters the room in a pale blue, chiffon and lace dress, looking just like a storybook princess. I fight back the tears. Throwing my arms around her, I hug her tight. "Okay Mom, don't mess up my hair." I take a step back, holding her at shoulders length, wanting to admire her some more. "I can't help it. You look beautiful." I stifle the sobs and squeeze her again. "Hey, who's cleaning up this mess?" Harper chimes in, noticing that I'm on the verge of an emotional breakdown.

My house is currently in complete disarray as Ashley, and three of her friends get ready for the evening, but I don't care. I smile at the clothing tornado and makeup bomb that seems to have gone off in my living room. The girls continue getting ready, squealing and giggling as they run through the house like Tasmanian Devils. *I revel in it.* "Did you take it?" Harper whispers. I plop down on the couch and twist the cap off my water bottle, staring at the mess I'll need to clean later. "We're not talking about this right now Harper," I say dismissively, hoping she's unable to read my face since I've



already taken a peek at the results. “We’ll deal with it later. Right now, I want to get some pictures of the girls before we leave.” I’m borrowing Harper’s minivan to drive them to the dance, since my car is too small. One of the other Mom’s will pick them up once the dance is over. There are no boys involved in the festivities, thank god because these ladies are way too young and I’m just not ready for that yet. Ashley explained that everyone at school is going as friends, but I hear the whispers from the girls about which boys they hope to dance with.

“Okay ladies, stand together and give me some beautiful smiles.” Harper leads the girls in front of the tiny flower garden outside the house. I’m curious about the cryptic looks that keep passing between Harper and Ashley. It seems like they’re harboring some evil plan. “I’d like to get a picture with Ashley and me.” I insist, noticing the girls are already losing interest in picture time. Harper snaps a few more, and I’m about to head inside and grab the car keys when a black stretch limo pulls up in front of the house. My eyebrows draw together and I notice the deviously knowing looks that pass between Harper and Ashley. The giggles from the other girls, tell me something is going on, and they all seem to be in on it. I’m pretty sure my jaw is hanging on the ground when Brad steps out from the back of the limo, and I can’t control the girly flutterings I get when he stalks straight toward me.

## CHAPTER 16

### BRAD

Sarah's frozen like a deer caught in the headlights, a beautiful sexy deer, as I march up to her. I stand in front of her, blocking the sun from her eyes, and she gasps just before I cup her face and seal my lips over hers. *God how I missed those lips.* I lift her feet off the ground, drowning in the kiss, almost forgetting where we are until I hear the giggles behind us and Harper clears her throat. "Brad, what the hell?" Sarah exclaims when I put her down and break the kiss. "We have some things to settle." "Brad, I don't think..." I put my finger to her lips, stopping her words. "We're going to settle this once and for all, but first we need to get these young ladies into the limo and off to their first dance." I step over to my daughter and give her a big hug and kiss. "Hi Angel, you look beautiful." Her cheeks blush, and she smiles brightly. "Brad, the girls are not going in a limo. I'm driving them." Four teenagers groan in unison. "The dance is ten blocks away for crying out loud. I can't send them in a limo, without their parent's permission." "Already taken care of Sunshine." I turn to Harper, and she winks at me. Sarah scowls between Harper and me as awareness begins to dawn on her face. "Harper!" *If looks could kill.* "Sorry, not sorry! Time to go ladies." Harper claps her hands together and leads everyone to the limo. Ashley sprints back to us, as the other girls pile in the car with Harper. She wraps her arms around me and then Sarah. Tears well in Sarah's eyes as she watches them pull away, then her expression hardens as she turns back to me.

Swiftly, I'm being tugged by the arm of my suit jacket, as Sarah leads me into the house. "Seriously Brad, what the

hell are you doing here?” She frowns, backing up to put some space between us. “I’m here to tell you how things are going to be.” Every step I take toward her, she takes a step backward until her back is against the wall. “Baby, I’m here to tell you that I love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I’ve been hurting so badly. I screwed up when I let you go fourteen years ago. I’m telling you now, I will never let you go again.” “Brad I…” I don’t let her continue as I cage her against the wall. “Brad, this is not going to work. You live in California and…” I press my fingertip to her lips. “Actually, I don’t live there anymore. I’m kind of in between places right now.” “I don’t understand.” “I sold my house, and I don’t have a job right now either.” “What are you saying?” “I’m saying that this unemployed, homeless man is here to stay. I love you. I want to make a life here with you, and Ashley. Let me give you the moon. I want to wake up to your beautiful sleepy face every morning and love you to sleep every night. Sarah, you’re all I’ve ever wanted. Only you.” Her eyes twinkle and she gives me a slow, sexy grin. “You have me.” She whispers. “Yeah?” “Yes, Brad I want to fight for us. I’m not scared anymore. I want this. I want us. I don’t want a life without you in it.” She smiles at me with such intensity, I can feel her love. I can tell how badly she wants me when her body melts into mine when we kiss. “Yes, Brad, you have me.” Her hands roam across my back, my arms, my chest, causing goosebumps everywhere. She groans into my mouth, and I kiss her forceful and needy, quickly wanting to be inside her. The desire for this woman, the ache is so strong, I feel like my body is on fire and she’s the only one who can put it out.

She squeals when I swoop her up in my arms and carry her to the bedroom. I kick the door shut behind us, and drop her gently onto the bed. Quickly, I begin to undress, flinging my jacket and shirt to the floor, never taking my eyes off hers. “Brad, wait, I need to tell you something first.” I crawl onto the bed and settle my hips between her legs. “We have so much time to talk Sunshine, but right now I’m dying to be inside you.” “Brad, wait, seriously, I have to tell you something.” I tilt my head to meet her eyes, my mouth quickly coming down on hers. Her hands roughly push against my chest. “What’s wrong?” I push up on my arms and study her

face, concerned with what I see. “Dammit Brad, let me up. I’m not kidding.” I sit up on my knees watching as she hops off the bed and sprints to the bathroom, leaving me confused and wondering what the hell just happened. She’s back in the doorway within a few seconds, staring at me with shimmering eyes. “Baby, talk to me.” She flings something small and white across the room, hitting me square in the chest. “This is what’s wrong.” She hisses. I stare down at the white plastic stick, knowing exactly what It’s going to say. I’m off the bed in a split-second, caging her face with my palms, kissing her gently on the lips. “Brad you know what that means, Right?” “Yes, Sunshine, It means I’m right here where I belong, and everything is perfect.” I drop to my knees in front of her, lifting her shirt to kiss her belly. “Perfect.” I whisper. “Sarah, you don’t know how happy you’ve just made me.” I choke the words out. I Lift my head up to find her staring at the ceiling. “Brad, I’m scared.” I bounce up on my feet and force her to look at me. “We can be scared together. I’m not going anywhere ever again. I’m finally home.” “But your job...And what is Ashley going to think? And the coffee shop...” I place my finger under her chin and tilt her head up to look at me. “Baby, do you think Ashley is going to be anything but ecstatic? I can work here, they have hospitals in Texas, don’t they? Maybe I can get a job at this little coffee shop I know.” Her mouth curves up into a half-smile. “I want forever with you. I’m going to buy a house big enough for our family, and take you guys on vacations. I want to make you coffee every morning and cook you dinner after you’ve had a long day. I want to get to know my daughter better, and I want to watch our new baby do all the things I missed with Ashley. I want everything with you. Don’t be scared. We’re going to have so much fun. There will be so much love in our home.” Her eyes shimmer with tears but I know they’re happy tears because she’s smiling.

I grab her hand and lead her to the bed, but she turns the tides when she pushes me down onto the mattress. She leans down, her eyes full of lust, and her warm lips crush mine. Breaking the kiss, she stands before me, with a devilish grin spreading across her lips. She grabs the hem of her shirt and seductively pulls it over her head. “You know I’m not the

easiest person to live with. I'm a very needy person." She says with a suggestive smirk, her cheeks turning a lovely shade of crimson. "What kind of needs are we talking about here?" She straddles my thighs, and her hands begin to work my belt. "Well, for one thing, I've recently discovered how much I really, really love sex, and I've heard that pregnant women are always horny. So there absolutely needs to be lots of that." She smooths her palms across my chest feeling every crevice. "You don't think we should wait until we get married? I mean we need to set a good example for our children." She giggles, and I love that sound. "I think that ship has sailed, and you really need to get these pants off right now."

She stands awkwardly, and we both chuckle when she trips over my leg that's dangling off the side of the bed. She works my pants and boxers off in a flash and my cock stands at attention. I scoot back onto the bed and she quickly shucks off the rest of her clothes. My heart pounds in my chest, when she straddles my thighs and runs her tongue across my abdomen, my chest, and my neck, licking, kissing and sucking me everywhere. Every press of her lips sending a bolt of electricity straight to my groin. "Sunshine, I want to taste you," I beg, starting to lose control as she grinds her wet pussy along my throbbing cock. "We have this house to ourselves for about four hours, so we have plenty of time for that stuff later. Right now, I just want to ride your cock." She murmurs against my cheek, and I am not about to argue.

She kisses my lips and gently nibbles on my chin, and it's so erotic when she sucks on my tongue. Slipping her hand between us, she seizes my dick, stroking and rubbing the head against her clit, jolting from the contact. My hand's fist in her hair and our tongues duel in a wild, sensual kiss. "Christ, Baby your pussy is so hot and wet." She draws her hips up and lines the head of my cock up to her center. Hovering, she gives me a seductive smile. Her mouth falls open and releases a soft moan as she slowly inches her way down the length of my dick. I don't think I've ever experienced anything as good as this feels. "Fuck Brad, It's so tight." I pull her body down, gently gripping her hair, and pull her lips to mine for a long and desperate kiss. I cup her breasts and roll her tight nipples

between my fingers. I lean down and take her pointy red nipple into my mouth and suck it firm. She moans with pleasure as I alternate to the other side and do the same. Her fingers continue to clutch my hair, her head falls back with a groan, and her nails dig into my scalp. "So good Brad!" "Baby, It feels so good. Fuck me, Sarah." She rocks her hips against my pelvis at a slow pace, but it doesn't take long before she lets loose and starts to fuck me hard. I fight to keep in rhythm with her thrusts. I can tell, from her whimpers and moans, and the way she arches her back, that she's close already. "Brad, I love you." My fingers dig into her hips as her movements become faster and deeper. "So deep this way!" She slides up and down my length. "Oh! Right there." Her pussy locks down on my cock so hard, It's dizzying. "Oh shit. Yes, Yes!" She chants as her pussy contracts, milking my cock and pushing me over the edge. I explode. My legs tremble, and I come so violently that the animalistic noise that just left my throat sounded painful.

Still connected and not ready to feel the loss of her yet, I roll us over, nestling myself tenderly on top of her. I kiss her everywhere, not wanting to miss an inch of her skin. "I will never, In one lifetime, be able to get enough of you, Sarah. I've wasted so much of my life, and I promise to make up for it every single day. My heart is beating again. You make me feel alive." Her palms rest against my cheeks and we stare into each other's eyes. "I love you so much, and I don't want any more wasted time. Will you marry me, Sarah?" She sucks in a deep breath and squeezes her eyes closed. I'm suddenly panicking. I'll be crushed if she says no. "Sarah, baby," I fret, trying to read her reaction. "Brad, I want to. I do, but It doesn't feel right yet. With everything that's going on with Ashley, she needs my full attention." "Okay." I swallow down my pride. "But what about..." She quiets me with a finger to my lips. "Brad I want to marry you. Of course, I'll marry you. I just think that maybe we could wait until Ashley gets her clean bill of health. Please don't be mad." "Baby, I'm not going anywhere, I'll wait for forever if I have to."

I jump from the bed and throw my pants on because I shouldn't be naked when I propose. Sarah sits herself at the

edge of the bed and wraps herself up in a sheet, curiously surveying me. I reach into my pocket and take out the sparkling solitaire diamond, nestled in a diamond-crusted platinum band. Its simple, elegant and timeless, just like my girl. I open the box then fall to one knee. "Sarah, you would make me the happiest man in the world if you'd be my wife. We'll wait until the time is right. Let's get our baby girl better first, but I want the world to know your mine. By the way, I did ask Ashley for her blessing first." Her hands are covering her mouth, but I can tell she is smiling. "Baby, you are the most beautiful, loving, caring person that I know. I love you with all my heart. I promise to make you coffee every morning and let you boss me around whenever you want. I promise to sex you up every night until you can't see straight. And I promise to protect you and Ashley and our baby with my life. I will always love the three of you with all my heart. Sarah Marie Thorensen, will you do me the honor of being my wife?" "Yes," She whispers, taking me by surprise when she jumps off the bed, drops the sheet and pounces me, pecking my face with sloppy kisses. "Yes, Brad, I will marry you. I love you, and you've made me the happiest woman in the world. Now can we get back to what you said earlier? Something about wanting to taste me."

We lie tangled together for a long time just holding each other, listening to our hearts beat, and I know this is where we were always supposed to end up. We make slow passionate love, our hearts, our minds, our bodies, our souls finally as one.

## **EPILOGUE**

### **5 MONTHS LATER**

We're sitting on pins and needles, anxiously awaiting the phone call from Dr. Collins. I've been trying to keep myself busy since Ashley had her tests two days ago to see if her Leukemia is in remission. I'm currently playing some stupid family game called "Apples to Apples" which has nothing to do with freaking apples, and I really don't give a shit about apples or anything else right now. "He said he would call first thing this morning. It's fu...It's eleven-thirty already." "Relax Baby, he'll call soon." I rise from the table and grab a bottle of water from the fridge, even though I'm not thirsty. I'm fucking on edge right now, and I can't sit still. In my heart I know it will be a good outcome, it has to be. I can't imagine my life without Ashley, we've become so close these past few months. She just recently asked if she could start calling me Dad, and even though I insisted she continue to call Ben Dad, I was thrilled. Hell, she can have two Dad's. She can have anything she wants. I can't imagine my life without Sarah either, and it still saddens me sometimes to think about all the years I wasted without her.

Sarah sneaks up next to me and runs her hand up and down my back trying to soothe the savage beast. I smile when she leans her big belly bump against my back. The one that's carrying our second daughter. She struggles to get her arms around my waist, and when I feel a kick, I'm so full of emotion it nearly brings me to my knees. My life has changed for the better, and even though I'm no longer a rock star



cardiologist from Los Angeles, I have everything I could ever want or need. I'm doing some consulting work for the hospital in Houston, and they even offered me a position, but I haven't decided if I want to take it yet. I'm having too much fun with my girls. Sarah even lets me help out at the coffee shop occasionally, since business has been booming. We just closed on a new house, only seven blocks away from this one and we'll be moving in right after Christmas. Ashley will still be close to her friends and school, Sarah to her shop, and our new place will have plenty of room for our growing family. Maybe I'll just be a stay at home Dad. I think it will suit me just fine.

Sarah's phone rings in her pocket, making the three of us startle. "Hello!" Sarah puts the phone to her ear with shaky hands. I move back to the table when I see the worry on Ashley's face. "It's okay, Angel. It's going to be good news." I take her tiny hand in mine as we wait. "Yes, I understand... Uh huh, okay, thank you." Sarah places the phone back in her pocket and turns to look at us with a huge grin on her face. "No bad cells found. The scan was clean, and everything looks great." Loud shrieks erupt. Sarah marches over to Ashley with tears in her eyes, and wraps her in a great big bear hug. I rise and take them both into my arms, a few tears threatening my own eyes. "Can I go to Jessie's house early to tell her the good news?" Ashley asks excitedly, breaking the hug. Yes, Jessie is a girl, and Ashley's best friend. No boys allowed until she's thirty-five. "I thought you were going over there later for the sleep-over?" Sarah questions. "I am, but I want to tell her the good news. So can I go over early?" "Sure Honey! Brad can drive you in a few minutes." I clear my throat. "Um, before you go I want to give you and Mom an early Christmas present." "Brad, Christmas is weeks away." Sarah scowls at me with her hands on her hips. *So damn Sexy*. "I know, but I want to do this early, hold on a minute."

I dash to the bedroom and sprint back with excitement. The girls are sitting at the table, studying me with curious eyes. "So I was going to wait to give you guys these but, in light of the good news, I decided to do it now." I slide the envelope over to Sarah, and she carefully opens it, glaring at me in the process. "Brad, what did you do?" Sarah's eyes grow

wide when she slides the airline tickets from the envelope before sliding them over so Ashley can get a gander. “We will be celebrating Christmas in Bora Bora this year ladies,” I say proudly waiting for their reactions. “Oh my god! Isn’t that the place with the huts on the water? Please tell me we are staying in one of those huts.” Ashley says, practically vibrating in her seat. “We are so staying in those huts, Angel.” I wink at Ashley who looks like she’s about to burst. “Brad, we can’t go to Bora Bora. What about the Bean?” “We can close the Bean for one week to take a vacation. Besides we have to close because Harper, Matty and her Mom will be coming with us.” I turn to Ashley. “Jessie is coming too, Angel.” Ashley squeals with excitement. “Brad, really?” I slide the velvet jewelry box over to Sarah, who still looks taken back. “Open it Sunshine.” She takes her time opening the box. “Wedding bands?” “Yup! We’re getting married on the island, Sunshine. I figured you’d want Harper there.” Sarah’s jaw is still hanging on the table. “Brad, this is all too much.” Sarah whispers, a little choked up. “I’m not taking no for an answer. Now go get ready. Harper’s coming to take you guys shopping in a little bit.” I say, handing my credit card to her. “Brad, you’re insane.” “Oh and Angel I thought you’d like something special too.” I slide the other jewelry box from my pocket. Ashley’s eyes grow wide when she opens the sparkling silver Pandora bracelet with one charm attached. A diamond studded heart because I want her to know she will always have mine. I figure I can fill it with new charms, every new milestone we encounter in the future. “Oh my god Dad, this is beautiful.” Ashley jumps up and gives me a great big bear hug. I help put the bracelet on her wrist and give her a kiss on her head. “Jessie’s really coming with us?” I give her wink. “You need some company since Mom and I will be on our honeymoon.” I wrap my arms around Sarah and kiss her on the neck. “Gross! I’m out. I’m going to call Jessie and see if she wants to go shopping with us.” Ashley rubs Sarah’s belly before escaping to her room.

“I can’t believe you did all this.” She wraps her arms around my waist and melts into my arms. “I can’t wait for you to be my wife. I love you so much.” She looks shell-shocked, and it makes me a little nervous. “You do want to marry me right?” “Of course I do. I just thought we were waiting until

after the baby is born.” Sarah has been slowly getting over her trust issues, and I think she finally realizes that I’m not going anywhere. “Please, please, please, make me the happiest man on earth and say yes.” She lets out a giggle, and gives me a smile that tells me she loves me and wants to be my wife more than anything. “Well, since you said please so many times, I won’t let you suffer anymore. You were willing to change your whole life for me, the least I can do is marry you. I’m not sure how I got so lucky, but yes, my answer is yes, Brad. I would love to be your wife.” In an instant I have her pushed against the countertop, my dick already straining to get out. This woman turns me on to no end. I press my lips to hers, and she slips her tongue into my mouth slow and sweet. It’s A kiss full of love. I hold her face between my palms forcing her to look at me, not wanting her to miss the emotion on mine. “Sarah, I adore you and our children. I’ll never do anything to hurt you. It’s you and me, Sunshine, for the rest of our lives. You will always be my forever. You, Ashley and this baby are the best things that have ever happened to me.”

“Oh for God’s sake, can’t you two keep your hands off one another for two minutes. No wonder my best friend is knocked up.” Harper’s voice annoyingly screeches through the house. “Okay lovers break it up. We got bikinis and wedding dresses to buy.” Sarah smiles then nuzzles her face into my neck, ignoring Harper. “Hold that thought, big guy, while I go burn a hole in your credit card. We’ll have the house to ourselves tonight, and I plan on rattling the windows with my screams.” Sarah slips from my grasp and starts to walk toward Harper, but I pull her back into my arms. “Later, you, me, bed, naked,” I whisper in her ear. “You got it, caveman. We have a lifetime.” Sarah winks and smiles with so much love my heart melts. Now I know what Its like to have a heartbeat. I’m exactly where I’m supposed to be. I plan on showing her for a lifetime how much I love her. I will strive to be the man she can count on, the man she deserves. She’s made me the happiest man alive, and I can’t wait to grow old with her. I can’t wait to have more babies with her and watch them grow. And when our children have children, I can picture watching them play in our yard curled up with my girl on the porch swing. I owe her everything for the way she’s changed my life,

and I will never stop loving her. She has given me a reason to live. She has given me heart.